

Round Trip to Hades in the Eastern Mediterranean Tradition

Visits to the Underworld from Antiquity to Byzantium

Edited by

Gunnel Ekroth and Ingela Nilsson

BRILL

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The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available online at http://catalog.loc.gov
LC record available at http://lccn.loc.gov/2018033025

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill." See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 2405-4771
ISBN 978-90-04-37266-5 (hardback)
ISBN 978-90-04-37596-3 (e-book)

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This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

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Acknowledgements

The present volume goes back to a conference held at Uppsala University, 9–12 October 2014, under the title *Round Trip to Hades: Visits to the Underworld in the Eastern Mediterranean Tradition.* The conference was organized in collaboration between the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History and the Department of Linguistics and Philology, and generously financed by The Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences (Riksbankens Jubileumsfond), Kungliga Humanistiska Vetenskapssamfundet i Uppsala and Helge Ax:son Johnssons Stiftelse. The aim of the conference was to explore the theme of the visit to the Underworld as broadly as possible and to bring together scholars working not only on different periods of the Greek tradition (from Homer to Byzantium), but also on different kinds of material (such as literature, inscriptions, material culture, art and music). We wanted to create fruitful discussions among philologists, archaeologists, and art historians to offer a wider interdisciplinary and comparative perspective.

Not all papers presented at the conference are included in the present volume, and some of the contributors did not attend the meeting at Uppsala. The call for papers and the conference remain, though, the source of inspiration for the majority of articles, and we would therefore like to thank all those who were present in Uppsala and contributed to the interesting and stimulating discussions. We are grateful also to those contributors who agreed to join the volume at a later stage, making the final product as comprehensive and interesting as we find it to be.

A heartfelt thanks goes to Adam Goldwyn for taking on the task of proofreading the entire volume in its final stage of production and to Floris van den Eijnde who encouraged us to submit the manuscript to the newly started *Cultural Interactions in the Mediterranean* series published by Brill.

It is our hope and belief that this volume and the conference from which it originated are only the beginning of more extensive collaborations between our respective fields of research, in Uppsala and internationally.

Gunnel Ekroth and Ingela Nilsson
Paris, 31 October 2017

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Le vase grec et ses destins (2003), *Parfums de l'Antiquité. La rose et l'encens en Méditerranée* (2008), *L'Antiquité au service de la modernité* (2008), *La villa romaine de Boscoreale et ses fresques* (2013), *Trésors hellénistiques de Mariemont* (2016). She has also published several articles on ancient Greek religion, Greek vases and iconography, history of collections of antiquities and transmission of Classical culture.

CHAPTER 1

Round Trip to Hades

An Introductory Tour

Gunnel Ekroth and Ingela Nilsson

The possibility of visiting the realms of the dead and yet returning alive is an idea that has fascinated people throughout time and across cultures. The European tradition goes back to Greek and Roman antiquity, represented by such famous round trips to Hades as those undertaken by Odysseus and Aeneas, but it is clear that the Graeco-Roman tradition had older Mesopotamian antecedents. Starting with these early representations, visits to the Underworld are subsequently found in many guises in both literature and art – they served as inspiration for and were reflected upon by ancient, Late Antique and Byzantine authors and artists, and they still do in our modern times. When putting together this volume, we were particularly interested in how the ancient motif has been treated, explored, transmitted and transformed over centuries or even millennia. The contributors were thus encouraged to explore how the core of the motif was at the same time preserved and reworked, and how that process may be seen to reflect an essential human concern in different cultural and social settings.

The round trip to the Underworld is one of the originally pagan topics that caught the interest of Christian writers. The importance of what happened in the afterlife made the motif relevant in a Christian context and meant that the numerous ancient representations could be explored in fruitful ways. The contributions of the present volume allow the reader to follow this passage from pagan to Christian representations of Hades – a passage that may seem surprisingly effortless. The actual location of Hades and the roads by which visitors travel there vary in both pagan and Christian traditions. The most common form of travel was some sort of descent (*katabasis*), but the traveller could also be made to travel to the very far East or West – beyond the outskirts of civilization and into the realm of mythical and fantastic creatures. Hades could even be located in Heaven or among the stars, which made the traveller perform an ascent (*anabasis*) rather than a descent. Both literary and artistic representations suggest that the round trip was reserved for mythical heroes of the past. For the living, the physical round trip was a more problematic undertaking: even if many sites in Greek antiquity contained entrances to the Underworld, there is little evidence for the belief in such practises. As a regular mortal, all you could do was to

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prepare for your journey to Hades in order to make the best of it once there, but you could never leave.

Hades was traditionally a dark and dull place, where forgetfulness and punishment seemed to reign simultaneously. However, since 'everyone' was there, it was also a place that offered opportunities to meet people and socialize. While Odysseus' meeting with the dead was a rather gloomy experience, Lucian turned the Underworld into a place for intense and humorous discussions about life and literature. This theme was further developed in Byzantine literature, opening up for both playful parody and social satire. In the Christian tradition, a clear desire may be distinguished to interact with and transform the pagan Hades, both as a place and a character. While some things stay more or less the same, there are also notable changes. One is that Hades becomes smellier as time goes by: stench and cesspools are staple ingredients in some Christian round trip accounts, as Hades is gradually transformed into Hell. Of course, Christianity also introduces Satan, who needs to be correlated with Hades, both as regards who actually rules the Underworld and how each of them is to be depicted in order to avoid confusion.

This development of the actual location is paralleled by that of the travellers' own experiences, in particular the perception of the dead they meet in Hades. Following Homer's accounts, in which they are sheer ghosts whom it is not even possible to properly embrace, the inhabitants of Hades subsequently acquire more and more of a physical body, with all the complications that follow if you are dead, that is, a corpse. For the ancient Greek traveller, the journey does not seem to have affected the body at all – or at least it is not noted in the representations. In the Christian Hades, by contrast, corporeality lies at the centre. According to some accounts, you may not be allowed to stay if you have too much flesh clinging to your soul, and when you leave you have to put your body back on, even if it has started to disintegrate and the bones have become exposed. It should be underlined, though, that literary and artistic representations vary widely, both in the ancient and the Byzantine tradition, and that one specific line of development thus is difficult to pin down. We think that the contributions of this volume will help in displaying and explaining some of that diversity.

Fritz Graf's chapter opens up the volume with a wide panorama of Underworld visits, including some of the classics: Dante's *Divina Commedia*, the fourth-century *Vision of Paul*, Vergil's sixth book of the *Aeneid* and the so-called *Nekyia*, Homer's account of Odysseus' visit to Hades. To these are added some less well-known round trips like those in the Pythagorean and Orphic traditions. At the focus lies the internal relation between these representations: how they influenced each other and – more importantly – consciously

interacted. Graf notes some common characteristics in the literary journeys to the Underworld, such as the fact that they are usually first-person accounts and eye-witness reports. Furthermore, the tradition is very self-conscious and constantly refers back to earlier reports in order to underpin the reliability of the individual account. According to Graf, this is an argument for seeing round trip accounts as a literary genre of their own. He concludes that round trip stories aim at changing the world of the living who listen to the account, while underlining the gradual increase – throughout the centuries – in the horrors of Hades, Hell or however we are to designate this location.

The earliest European *katabasis* is the one undertaken by Odysseus, the *Nekyia* of the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*. Although highly influential, most notably for Vergil and hence later traditions, Odysseus never actually visited Hades but rather consulted the dead by means of a hole dug in the ground. To use a pit (*bothros*) for contacting and communicating with the Underworld, by the sacrifice of animals and by having their blood flow into the hole, followed by the burning of their bodies in a holocaust, is a practice explored by Gunnel Ekroth. Looking at the evidence for such rituals in Greek literary, epigraphical and iconographic sources, it is evident that the Homeric account was a strong source of inspiration or even a template for later stories of ritual uses of pits to access the dead, rather than a reflection of real, practiced rituals. This was the case until the later Roman period, when it seems that an oracle attempted to create a real ritual from the Homeric model. The fact that the pit ritual was not a part of living Greek religion, argues Ekroth, supports the explanation that the origin for this particular ritual is to be found outside of Greece: preferably in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly in Anatolia.

A specific part of Hades, namely Tartaros, is the topic of the next chapter. Ivana Petrovic and Andrej Petrovic here explore the descent into the Underworld by divine beings described in Hesiod's *Theogony*. This is a journey often linked to power struggles and rarely undertaken voluntarily, as when Zeus banishes the Titans to Tartaros to enable his rule over the world. Such an action was prone to being combined with bondage, in order to prevent an *anabasis* of these unwanted beings. Still, Zeus himself undertakes two *katabaseis* in order to access the potent forces of the Underworld: first to liberate the Cyclopes so as to make use of their thunderbolts and lightning, and later to free the Hundred-Handers. He also sends down the goddess Iris to fetch water from the river Styx, as a means to make the Titans swear a binding oath. In Hesiod, the round trip to Hades is accordingly a means for divinities to procure resources, although – for some awesome and destructive powers – this has to be a one-way journey in order not to disturb the Olympian order.

In the next chapter, Scott Scullion discusses visits to Hades from the point of view of the Orphic or Bacchic lamellae – thin gold leaves bearing instructions given to those initiated in particular cults as to how their souls were to navigate the hazards in Hades and handle the judges of the dead. These texts are not to be taken as presenting a precise and clearly formulated theological doctrine, as has often been assumed, but rather as reflecting the teachings of individual ritual specialists. Scullion's detailed analysis of the wording of the tablets offers several new interpretations. The much discussed formula "I am from the starry heaven and earth," which occurs on several tablets, does not make obscure theological claims but means, quite literally, that the initiate comes from the world above, bounded by earth and sky. Scullion also proposes a new (or rather re-affirms an older) reading of the expression ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν καθαρά: referring to the initiate himself coming from the pure and turning to the queen of the Underworld, who is also pure (*kathara*), it creates a particular bond between them. Scullion also argues that the initiates in possession of these tablets did not perceive of themselves as ordinary disembodied souls, but as a kind of post-mortem version of themselves.

The gold leaves are also of central importance to Miguel Herrero de Járegui's chapter, which focuses on the role of the concepts *pathein* and *mathein*, 'to suffer' and 'to learn', in accounts of Hades and visits to the Underworld. He offers a review of the use and meaning of these notions in ancient literature and suggests that the gold leaves, as well as other stories of trips to the realms of the dead, aimed at giving mortals a glimpse of the Underworld before actually arriving there. However, the perception of the journey to Hades differed according to its context. If set in the ritual sphere, as in actual initiation, the experience was of an extraordinary kind (*pathos*) that forever changed the initiated; in the literary sphere, the emphasis was on learning (*mathein*), through images and teachings of the doctrines of afterlife. Herrero de Járegui argues that the process of initiation, as evidenced by the gold tablets, could be characterized as either quick and vertical – a transformation into a god, which would explain the enigmatic expression "you fell, a kid, into the milk" – or progressive and horizontal, slowly learning by travelling the sacred road of the Bacchic initiates. In spite of discussions that began in antiquity, it remains unclear which of the concepts, *pathein* or *mathein*, should be considered the earliest.

A wide range of evidence, archaeological as well as textual, is treated by Sofia Kravaritou and Maria Stamatopoulou in a chapter on notions connected with journeys to the Underworld in Thessaly from the Archaic to the Hellenistic period. One of the most famous literary examples describes the Thessalian princess Alkestis' *katabasis*, reflecting the eschatological perspectives of Athens in the fifth century BCE. A number of Thessalian cults,

however, concerned divinities associated with the Underworld, such as En(n)odia, Dionysos and Persephone. Some of the most explicit gold lamellae come from this region. Thessalian funerary epigrams witness reflections of a particular status of the departed in the afterlife; some stress virtuous life, others follow the norms or topoi of the period, and some of them echo phrases of the Orphic-Bacchic reliefs. The authors stress that the exalted place promised or advertised for some dead in the afterlife is linked both to their virtuous lifestyle and to their individual status as intellectuals or physicians – members of an educated elite. Moreover, grave goods, in particular food remains, indicate that the departed was viewed as embarking on a journey, another sign of a particular concern among Thessalians for a safe passage to Hades.

Herakles' experience of Hades is the focus of the following chapter, as Annie Verbanck-Piérard examines the literary and iconographical representations of his round trips. She underlines in particular the divergence between different kinds of sources. The written and mythographic tradition focuses on Herakles' violent and powerful actions, bringing Kerberos and Theseus back from the Underworld and even fighting Death to rescue Alkestis – themes that were developed in Athenian tragedies. The Attic iconography that concentrates predominantly on Kerberos and Herakles can here be represented as almost taming the feral animal, being patient and empathic. The motif becomes particularly popular in South Italian vase painting in the fourth century BCE, especially on vases placed in tombs. Herakles freeing Theseus is, on the other hand, never a very common motif in art. More frequent are representations of Herakles in the presence of a deity with a cornucopia, presumably a fertility god linked to the Underworld. According to Verbanck-Piérard, this composition could suggest a safer and less uneasy aspect of Hades, perhaps related to various mystery cults.

We then turn to Hades in Hellenistic philosophy, the topic of Adrian Mihai's chapter. Greek philosophers expressed little interest in visits to Hades in the sense of heroic round trips. Instead, they were more concerned with the concept of Hades as such: where it was cosmologically situated, the nature of the souls and their abode after the demise of the body – on the whole, perspectives very different from those of poets. According to the Platonists and the Stoics, Hades was a place of transit, to be found either under the earth or in heaven, where souls were purified to be able to return to their divine abode. Tartaros, on the other hand, was a location for eternal punishment, a place from which no soul could escape. Considering the discrepancies in approaches to Hades in different intellectual traditions and settings, Mihai emphasizes that the relation between the philosophical and religious views of Hades would certainly profit from further study.

A more concrete aspect of round trips to Hades is dealt with by Wiebke Friese, who looks at Graeco-Roman death oracles from an archaeological perspective. Starting from Homer's *Nekyia*, her chapter explores to what extent necromantic sanctuaries can be traced in the archaeology of the ancient Mediterranean sacred landscape. Of particular interest are locations thought to be entrances to Hades and the so-called *nekyomanteia* or *psychopompeia* at Ephyra, Herakleia Pontike, Tainaron and Lake Avernus near Cumae, as well as sanctuaries where an intermediary interacted with the Underworld on behalf of the living, such as the cult of Trophonios at Lebadeia, the plutonia at Acharaka and Hierapolis, and the Bes oracle at Abydos in Egypt. There are apparent inconsistencies in the literary and archaeological evidence from antiquity to modern times as to how these sites functioned and what their precise purpose was. Friese argues that Homeric myth clearly influenced the invention and spatial formation of specific cults, rituals and sites connected to interactions with Hades, but that these accounts were never based on an actual historical ritual or topography.

A *katabasis* was not only an emotionally stressful experience, it was frequently also thought to be accompanied by particular sounds. The bellowing, roaring and hissing that could be heard when one went down into Hades is discussed by Pierre Bonnechere. This aspect of descents into the Underworld has been little studied previously and opens up new perspectives on the journey to Hades. Consultation of the oracle of Trophonios, initiation into the mysteries as described in Aristophanes' *The Clouds* and theurgic ritual for summoning a god – all these instances were accompanied by intense sounds. So was, apparently, each instance when the boundary between the world of the living and the world of the dead opened up. Bonnechere shows how even possession could be linked to bellowing, as shown in, for example, Euripides' *Bacchae* and *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, as well as in the use of magic. A particular aspect of this soundscape was the circularity of the noise and the sensation of whirling and spinning, perceptions of which can even be traced in ancient art.

An ancient author with a particular interest in Hades and round trips to the realms of the dead was Lucian, who used the Underworld as a setting in several texts. Heinz-Günther Nesselrath offers an overview of the many Lucianic variations of the *katabasis* theme. Some of his texts deal specifically with the living visiting the Underworld, like Menippos, who was taken there by the "Chaldean" magus Mithrobarzanes in a copycat version of the Homeric *Nekyia*. After seeing the sights, Menippos learns the meaning of life from Teiresias before ascending into the cave of Trophonios. Lucian also provides many other accounts: how a hunter who saw Hekate descended into Hades and thereby managed to get a good view of the Underworld, or how a very sick philosopher

who was taken down to Hades too early had to come back up again. A *parabasis* not involving a descent but a journey to the Western end of the world to reach the Island of the Blessed is found in the *True Histories*, while another text offers an *anabasis* of Charon, who is taken on a tour of the world of the living by Hermes, all the while complaining about the futility of the living in catering for the dead. Lucian thus demonstrates the more or less endless variations of the motifs, later to be developed by both Byzantine, early modern and modern authors.

In the next chapter, Zissis Ainalis takes us from the pagan Underworld into the Christian equivalent, which is still called Hades. The earliest narrative of a round trip to a Christianized Graeco-Roman Hades dates to the middle of the second century, initiating the renaming and rebranding of Hades as Hell in the Christian literary tradition. In the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, Jesus himself descends to the Underworld in order to recuperate the Righteous. The *Vision of Paul* (end of the 4th c.) narrates Paul's visit to the world below, where the sinners and unbelievers are imprisoned and punished – a proper Hell. The *Life of Saint Macarius the Roman* (end of the 4th or beginning of the 5th c.) is the rich and fabulous account of three monks' elaborate round trip to Hell, a place located beyond the end of the known world. This representation suggests that, by this time, Hell had become consolidated in the Christian imagination as a place of darkness, stench, heat and torments, with a cesspool and a typology of sinners.

Another famous visitor to Hades was the Virgin Mary, whose complex interactions with the realm of the dead and the deceased are discussed by Thomas Arentzen. The tradition of how the Virgin challenged and neutralized Hades spans the fourth to the ninth centuries and is evident in a great variety of Christian contexts. In the ninth-century *Akathistos Hymn*, Mary breaks down the gates of Hades, opening up a gateway to Paradise through her own body, which becomes a gateway in itself. Andrew of Crete (late 7th to early 8th c.) instead imagines Mary's soul as actually going down into Hades after death, learning the lay of the land in order to guide Christians through the realm of the dead on to the other side. Romanos the Melodist (early sixth century) has Mary singing in the cave at Bethlehem, awakening the slumbering Eve and Adam in Hades, and then comforting them and promising them relief by taking them away from the Underworld. Arentzen shows how Mary's death could even be a cosmic event in which the whole world – including the dead – takes part, causing them to become invigorated.

The iconographic rendering of Hades in Byzantine art is then explored by Henry Maguire. There is a remarkable difference in the depiction of Hades in the Western traditions, where he is a fearsome monster, and the Byzantine

images, where he has more or less normal human features and proportions. Within the Byzantine tradition, there is also a change from the earliest eighth-century portrayals of Hades, where his naked body was coloured black, conflating him with Satan, to later Byzantine paintings and mosaics where he has lost much of his dark pigmentation, thus differentiating him from the Devil. These distinctions are linked to the context where the images occur: the 'beautiful' Hades appears in the *Anastasis* (Resurrection) icons, while in Byzantine art at large, he was portrayed as a monster with a distended belly, claws and dishevelled hair. The explanation for the bodily appearance of Hades in icons, Maguire argues, is that they were objects of worship – images opening into the world of the spirit and giving direct access to Christ, but potentially also to other beings represented. In order to ease the sense of discomfort at the idea of possibly also worshipping Hades, the problematic parts of his iconography were played down – particularly his association with Satan and any possible identification with pagan idols – while still providing Christ with a credible adversary.

The continued interest in Hades in the Byzantine period is evident from Ingela Nilsson's chapter, which discusses rhetorical and literary elaborations of the *katabasis* motif in twelfth-century literature. Visits to the Underworld could be used both as a literary parody of Lucian and as a way to satirize contemporary society. Sometimes the two were combined, as in the *Timarion* – a dialogue in which the protagonist Timarion describes a Hades populated by both ancient and Byzantine characters. Nilsson here focuses on two rhetorical exercises in which Nikephoros Basilakes employs Homeric and Biblical material in order to problematize how anyone can enter Hades and then leave, considering what happens to the body after death. When Odysseus visits the Underworld "in the flesh" in the first text under examination, his old adversary Ajax perceives an additional sign of Odysseus' dishonesty and deceit. In the other text, Hades' reactions to Lazarus being raised from the dead are likewise concerned with the relation between the dead body and the soul. Nilsson argues that the exercises in question offer a sophisticated reconciliation of pagan and Christian traditions in a partly serious, partly playful manner.

The character of Hades in the Byzantine satirical tradition is further explored by Przemysław Marciniak, who discusses the twelfth-century *Timarion* and *Against Hagiochristophorites* and the fifteenth-century *Mazaris*. Following Lucian's representation of Hades as a place where figures from various historical periods interact, the Underworld here offers an intricate mixture of pagan and Christian elements. Punishments include being bitten by Kerberos, tortured in Tartaros and burned by an unquenchable fire, the last a typically Christian feature. The judges of the dead are ancient Greek mythical kings next

to a Christian emperor, but anyone can stick to the religion they prefer – hardly a reflection of official Byzantine ideology. Perhaps the greatest satirical twist is the emphasis on the fact that the judicial process in Hades is impartial and incorrupt – a clear sign that these round trips criticize contemporary conditions and express their wish for a different society.

In the final chapter, Sarah Iles Johnston takes us up to modern times, looking at contemporary stories of round trips to the Underworld and the effects that such journeys had on the travellers. Her starting point is the ancient Greek imagination of those actually returning from Hades, not as ghosts but as reincorporated persons or revenants. In the mythical stories of revenants, they return to life as a favour bestowed by the gods or being raised by an exceptional mortal, sometimes fighting off Death, and with their bodies intact. There is no fear of those returning in embodied form and some even enter a new divine state. The contrast to modern twentieth-century stories of the West is striking, beginning with W. W. Jacobs' "The Monkey's Paw" (1902). Here, the return of the dead never ends happily and is perceived as something unnatural, with the body decaying and sometimes possessed by an evil force. The ancient Greeks feared the return of the soul as a ghost, while the body of those returning from Hades was of little interest. Christianity, on the other hand, viewed the rot and disarticulation of the body as a necessary step towards resurrection, but to return from Hades prematurely, as a reanimated corpse, was an evil thing. As Johnston shows, such ideas have offered inspiration for much modern fiction, ranging from H. P. Lovecraft to Stephen King.

The volume closes with an epilogue written by Eric Cullhed and Sigrid Schottenius Cullhed, offering a reflection on the volume's contents and theme – this curious human need to imagine and visualize journeys to the Underworld. To the material already discussed by other contributors they add the fifteenth-century *Apokopos* by the Cretan Renaissance poet Bergadhis, a work that spans both Eastern and Western Underworld traditions. With a focus on the emotional and cognitive workings of the *katabasis* motif, Cullhed and Schottenius Cullhed discuss how representations of death as a departure may function as a kind of vaccine: "a controlled exposure to emotional triggers that prepares the readers for future moments of death anxiety that might come." At the same time, we should not deny the power of artistic representation, which has the power to transform sadness into at least partial pleasure. Most importantly, all departures are not the same and the representations offer endless variations in which the individual details may play an important role.

As meditations on the human condition, narratives of journeys to the Underworld seem to have a cross-cultural validity that few other stories have. This is probably also the reason why they have travelled so effortlessly through

different societies and periods, all the way up to our own time. There is a winding but distinct line of imagination from the Near East onto Homer and Vergil via early Christian texts and Dante to such recent representations as Salmon Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (2000) or David Bowie's *Lazarus* (2015). More work remains to be done, but we hope that this volume will offer a useful selection of material and analyses and thus a fruitful point of departure for future studies.

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Since this volume spans two periods that are rarely treated together – the Classical and the Byzantine – we had to negotiate two different academic traditions. In the contributions dealing with the Classical world, there are usually no indications of critical editions, as these texts are usually well established and easily accessible. The situation is very different for the Medieval and Byzantine material, so in chapters dealing with those traditions all editions are listed in separate sections of the bibliographies. A related issue is that of transliteration of names. We have adopted the now rather common spelling of Greek names, words and places (Herakles, katabasis, Nekyia), but kept the more traditional Latinized-Anglicized forms for some Classical authors (Aeschylus, Lucian, Hesiod) and places (Mycenae, Attica). The latter goes also for some titles of works that are known primarily under those names (*Bacchae*, *Gospel of Nicodemus*). Byzantine names have been transliterated according to their spelling in the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. With the exception of those guidelines, we have allowed the authors themselves to decide whether to write in American or British English. We have also let them decide how much original Greek to cite and/or transliterate, which means that contributions look different depending on the contributors' disciplinary belonging. Abbreviations for periodicals follow *L'année philologique* (http://www.annee-philologique.com/).

CHAPTER 2

Travels to the Beyond

A Guide

Fritz Graf

Narrations of or by people who travelled to a world beyond our own are numerous, popular, and ancient: it appears to be a deeply ingrained cultural constant that one imagines another world, following different laws. In this essay, I will deal with the varied forms of such stories in the Mediterranean past. I will take what in many ways is the unsurpassed and perhaps unsurpassable pinnacle of the genre in Western literatures, Dante's *Divina Commedia*, as the starting point for a journey backwards in time, back to the first manifestations of these narrations in the literatures of ancient Mesopotamia. Most of it will deal with Greek and Latin authors and text; those are, after all, the texts that I understand best.[1]

Starting with Dante

The *Divina Commedia* opens, as we all know, with a mid-life crisis:

> *Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*
> *mi ritrovai di una selva oscura,*
> *che la diritta via era smarrita.*

> Midway in the journey of our life I found myself in a dark wood, for the straight way was lost.[2]

At the age of thirty-five, the midpoint of an ordinary life, Dante has lost his way. He is also frightened by wild animals that slink by: a leopard, a lion and a she-wolf. He is rescued by what he first perceives as "either shade or living man" (*od ombra od omo certo*). This turns out to be none other than "that Vergil and that source" (*quel Virgilio e quella fonte*), whom Dante, quickly forgetting his plight, addresses with enthusiastic praise – only to be told by Vergil that there

1 For a relatively detailed overview see also Coulianou 1991 and, with a narrower focus, Bremmer 2002; for the Greek world and a perspective that transcends the beyond, see Johnston 1999.

2 Dante, *Inferno* 1.1–3.

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is no direct way out of the place where he has been caught, but that he has to make a long detour, presumably the longest detour in the history of literature. Vergil offers himself as a guide, at least as far as God will allow him go. "Then he set out, and I kept behind him" (*Allor si mosse, ed io li tenni dietro*): this short and terse sentence at the very end of Canto I of *Inferno* marks the start of this round trip, as if they would just step on the arriving bus. But we should not trust the briskness. Dante and Vergil need another canto before they arrive at that famous inscription that orders all who enter to give up hope.[3] First, the narrator is afraid to proceed and needs to hear Vergil's report of how Beatrice, aware of her friend having lost his way in the dark forest, sent Vergil to rescue him; the argument helps. At the same time, the poet Dante uses the occasion to refer to his predecessors: how can I do this, he asks, "I am neither Aeneas nor Paul" (*io non Enëa, io non Paulo sono*).[4]

Dante is aware of the long tradition that he follows: in a certain sense, the *Divina Commedia* marks the high point of a long literary tradition, if not its end. I do not want to follow Dante and his guide further into Inferno, beyond the point of no hope and no return; their route is well known, at least in its first part. Instead, I want to take up his challenge and look at the tradition in which he places himself. I will follow the two signposts that he left us – Vergil's Aeneas as the over-arching Classical, Roman and pagan model for a trip to Hades, written by Vergil, whom God kept away from Paradise as a rebel; and Paul as the Christian par excellence, the "Chosen Vessel" as Dante says,[5] who is the representative of the much less explored continent of Christian travel narratives, which have caught the interest of scholars only in the last few decades. I will use both signposts to better understand the history of this type of narrative, its forms and the needs that led to these forms. Incidentally, it will also become clear how original and fresh Dante's narration is, despite the long tradition.

Paul's Vision

First, Paul.[6] The *Vision* (or *Apocalypse*) *of Paul* (or, in the Latin medieval title, the *Visio Pauli*) elaborates on the intriguing passage in 2 Corinthians 12:2–5 where Paul tells us that "I know a Christian man who fourteen years ago [...] was caught up as far as the third heaven." The man who had this disconcerting

3 Dante, *Inferno* 3.1–9.
4 Dante, *Inferno* 2.32.
5 Dante, *Inferno* 2.28: *Andovi poi la vas d'elezione*.
6 On the *Vision of Paul*, see also the contribution by Ainalis in the present volume.

visionary experience was none other than Paul of Tarsos himself, and it defines him as one of those Eastern Mediterranean charismatics who, as the unknown author of a fourth century BCE text from a grave in Macedonian Derveni says, "made the sacred a profession" and travelled from town to town and province to province.[7] No wonder that Paul, when in Ephesos, collided with another group of such experts, itinerant Jewish exorcists.[8]

Paul's report in 2 Corinthians is silent about what he saw up there; the *Visio* fills this gap.[9] In its fullest version, the vision begins with a reference to Paul's ascent in 2 Corinthians, adds a short report about how the text was found in Tarsos, and continues with Paul's direct voice: "The word of the Lord came to me thus: 'Say this to the people: how long will you transgress and add sin to sin and tempt the Lord who made you?'"[10] Paul takes up the mantle of a prophet, and after describing how creation and all the angels complain about mankind, he begins to tell us what he experienced when "one of the spiritual beings [...] caught me up in the Holy Spirit and carried me up to the [...] third heaven." This angelic being becomes Paul's guide and leads him on a detailed visit to the place where every soul is judged after death, then to Paradise, Hell, and back to Paradise. From there, Paul is sent back with the task of telling men about what he saw: "I, Paul, came to myself and I knew and understood what I had seen and I wrote it on a scroll" – after which he hides the scroll in a marble box in his house in Tarsos and does not care to execute the angel's command. Three centuries later, an angel appeared to the owner of Paul's former house and convinced him to dig in the floor. He found the box, still sealed, and brought it unopened to a local judge who in turn sent it to Emperor Theodosios (379–395) because "he was afraid that it was something else" – something forbidden, connected with sorcery. Theodosios opened it, found the scroll together with Paul's sandals, had it copied, and sent the original to Jerusalem for safekeeping. All this, the text claims, happened when Kynegios (Cynegius) was consul, in the year 388.

This is, of course, all fiction – a way to explain why such an autobiographical text became known more than three hundred years after its author's death, and also to give it the legitimization and authority of Theodosios I, the emperor who, unlike anyone before him, cared for the Christianization of the

7 Derveni Papyrus, col. XX 3–4: παρὰ τοῦ τέχνην ποιουμένου τὰ ἱερά; see Kouremenos, Parássoglou and Tsantsanoglou 2006.

8 *Acts* 19.13–16.

9 I cite the English from Hennecke and Schneemelcher 1965. The Latin text goes back to the late 4th c., but Origen mentions an earlier version, Silverstein 1935; see also Bremmer and Czachesz 2007.

10 Translations are mine if not otherwise stated.

empire. The Greek text must have appeared not long after 388: in the early 400s, Augustine knew of and rejected it as "the empty Apocalypse of Paul," written by some daring man (*audax*) who wanted to reveal what the apostle had hidden.[11] Accordingly, it features in the list of apocrypha called the *Decretum Gelasianum*, attributed by scholars either to pope Gelasius I (492–96) or Hormisdas (514–20).[12] Despite this rejection, it became the founding text of medieval apocalypticism, with translations of the (mostly lost) Greek original into all the languages that mattered: Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, Coptic, Arabic, Church Slavonic, Ethiopic and Latin. The Latin translation must have appeared not long after the Greek original in order for Augustine and, a century later, the pope behind the *Decretum Gelasianum* to condemn it. The Latin text spawned a host of versions and almost as many translations as versions into Western languages.

The way from Paul to Dante was tortuous and complex.[13] Augustine himself was not unwilling to credit people with having seen heaven and hell – albeit not in a God-sent vision. In the short and late treatise *De cura gerenda pro mortuis*, he tells the story of one Curma, a blacksmith who died and appeared before God, only to be sent back with the argument that he was the wrong Curma; there had been a mix-up in the celestial bureaucracy and the blacksmith returned to tell everybody that yes, it was true, when you died your soul was to be judged.[14] This is not a Pauline vision as the result of rapture, but a near-death experience with a somewhat comical undertone.[15]

At about the same time, Augustine's irascible colleague Jerome told a vision of his own to a young female friend, Eustochium, to warn her against worldly pride. When he was so sick that his friends were already preparing his funeral, he dreamt – or rather, he was "suddenly caught in his spirit" (*subito*

11 Augustine, *In Evangelium Ioannis tractatus* 98.8: *vani quidam Apocalypsim Pauli, quam sana non recipit Ecclesia, nescio quibus fabulis plenam, stultissima praesumptione finxerunt, dicentes hanc esse unde dixerat raptum se fuisse in tertium coelum, et illic audisse ineffabilia verba quae non licet homini loqui*. "In stupid arrogance, they wrote the Apocalypse of an invented Paul which the sane Church does not accept, full of some fictional stories, and they tell us that this was the starting point from which he tells us that he was caught up to the third heaven where he heard unspeakable words that a human may not pronounce." The reference to the introduction of the Apocalypse that in turn cites Paul is obvious.

12 See Dobschütz 1912.

13 Text anthologies Ciccarese 1987, Dinzelbacher 1989 and Gardiner 1989. Still fundamental are Dinzelbacher 1981 and Carozzi 1994.

14 Augustine, *De cura gerenda pro mortuis* 12.15 (*CSEL* 41.644–47); Ciccarese 1987, 108–13; see Carozzi 1994, 581 and 584.

15 On near-death experiences in vision texts, see Bremmer 2002, 87–102.

raptus in spiritu) and brought before God to be judged.[16] When interrogated, Jerome claimed to be a Christian, but this answer angered God who famously retorted: "You are lying, you are a Ciceronian, not a Christian" (*Ciceronianus es, non Christianus*). God had him flogged for being a worshiper of pagan prose; Jerome woke up with the welts still visible on his back. This is no Pauline rapture vision, despite the wording in the introduction, but a dream that comes very close to a near-death experience. Jerome's text, lacking in topographical precision, still describes how he "reverted to the world above" (*revertor ad superos*) as if ascending from the Underworld.[17]

At any rate, in the centuries to come the near-death experience became the main vehicle for medieval trips to Hell. We catch the echoes of this in Dante's introduction: the dark forest in which he finds himself is not only "dark" but "wild, harsh, rugged" and "hardly less bitter than death," and Dante is unable to tell how he arrived there because his mind was "full of sleep" – instead of launching into a realistic narration, Dante plays with the elements that the tradition has given him.[18] This tradition – even when looking only at the Latin West – is vast, exciting, and only slowly beginning to be better researched. I am no medievalist and do not claim expertise beyond that of an avid reader and a Classicist who tries to understand his own much more fragmentary and submerged tradition by looking at a later tradition that, at least partially, feeds on the Classical one.

The medieval travels to the beyond are foreshadowed by accounts embedded in the writings of Church Fathers, like the ones in Augustine and Jerome to which I just alluded, or the earlier dream visions of Perpetua during the time she spent in the prison of Carthage at the time of the emperor Commodus.[19] But Perpetua's dreams have a function that is very different from the one of the later texts. They do not try to change human sinfulness, as Jerome's dream or Paul's vision do, but they reassure the future martyr that heavenly rewards are certain. The conversion visions, on the other hand, begin at the moment when Christianity realized that the Last Judgment would need time to come, perhaps centuries, and that in the meantime the individual had to prepare her soul for the afterlife – Jerome's and Augustine's narrations and the *Vision of Paul*, all fourth-century texts, belong to this new view. They begin to become much more serious with the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great at the end of the

16 Jerome, *Epistulae* 22.30, to Eustochium (*CSEL* 54.190).

17 See Ciccarese 1987, 93.

18 Dante, *Inferno* 1.2 (*selva oscura*), 5 (*era selva selvaggia e aspra e forte*), 7 (*tant'è amara che poco è più morte*) and 11 (*era pien di sonno*).

19 For a good annotated text, see Bastiaensen et al. 1987, 107–47 and 412–52.

sixth century, a collection of Saints' miracles with some theological framework in which Pope Gregory gave a Western, Italian answer to the growing number of Eastern, Greek saints lives; his collection contains several round trips to the Beyond, all near-death experiences.[20] The collection became so successful that it eclipsed all earlier Christian visions and, together with Paul's vision, founded the new genre of free-standing travel narratives – the Merovingian monk who recorded the vision of his fellow monk Barontius refers twice back to Gregory, and in Carolingian times another visionary, the monk Wetti of Reichenau, had the *Dialogues* read to him between two visionary dreams.[21] Unlike Paul's vision, these later text are not the visions of ecstatics, but mostly the dreams of individuals who are very often critically ill and close to death (Wetti would die two days after his visions). They are thus variations of the near-death experience, and unlike Paul's report they are usually reported by someone else and do not adhere to a pseudo-autobiographical first-person narrative – Wetti's vision, for example, is recorded by a fellow Reichenau monk, Heito, and then versified by the famous monk-poet in nearby St. Gall, Walahfrid Strabo.[22] The distinction between vision and dream is almost moot in this medieval world where *visio* can mean both dream and vision, and where the key distinction is the one between false and true *visiones*: as Jacques Le Goff once pointed out, in ancient and medieval Christianity only a few dreams are true revelations, and their dreamers are not ordinary humans but saints, kings and similarly exalted persons.[23] But unlike Paul, these dreamers to whom God grants true *visiones* are not ecstatics and religious professionals, but people whose body has been critically weakened by an illness that loosed the bond between body and soul. Some later narratives tell us explicitly that the soul temporarily left the body in order to visit the Beyond, and Jerome did the same. Ecstatic visions without an accompanying illness are very rare in this world: I counted three, all happening on High Christian festivals, Easter, Pentecost, and during All Souls' week, when Christians could already feel closer to their god.

20 The role of Gregory was emphasized by Ciccarese 1989.

21 *Visio Baronti* 10 and esp. 17 where the author cites Gregory, *Dialogi* 4.36.14 (the damned are "bound in bundles for burning," *ligabantur in fasciculis ad conburendum*); *Visio Wettini* 4 (p. 269 Dümmler 1884).

22 For the prose version, see Dümmler 1884, 267–75; for a provisional critical text, see Pollard. For the poetical versions, see Traill 1974, Knittel 1986 and Stella 2009; a Latin reading text of the prose version with Italian translation and notes in Ciccarese 1987, 402–45; an excerpt of the prose version in Dinzelbacher 1989, 52–59. The text presupposes the death of Charlemagne, ch. 11.

23 Le Goff 1988, 220–23.

The new role of these texts manifests itself in all sorts of details. Perpetua's God Father was a man "with white hair and the dress of a shepherd" who was milking a goat, greeted her in a friendly manner ("welcome, my child" – *bene venisti, tegnon*, with the Greek word for child presumably an echo of everyday familiarity)[24] and fed her a slice of sweet goat cheese. The newer conversion God, however, is a serious judge – severe and not above supervising himself Jerome's beating in Jerome's vision, serene and handing over punishment to the opposition in all later texts: this is why we meet all those grim and fiery devils and those imaginative tortures that shape not only Dante's *Inferno*.

Tortures and devils are part of the genre. Depending on the aim, they affect all sinners, or specific individuals. Barontius, a late seventh-century monk in Saint-Cyran, France, lists not just secular groups – murderers or perjurers – but also "clerics who stained themselves with women," and even two contemporary bishops who are tortured and howl with pain.[25] Heito, the monk from Carolingian Reichenau who recorded the vision of his fellow monk Wetti, talks at length about the punishment of the sodomites, but also about "a prince who once ruled Italy and the Roman people" and whose genitals are continuously bitten by some terrible animal – this is none other than Charlemagne, whose sexual appetite was widely known.[26] Tnugdal, an Irish knight whose vision was recorded by a German monk in 1148, is equally expansive on lusty clerics: they were swallowed by a monster, became pregnant inside its body, were then thrown into an icy desert where they all, monks and nuns, gave birth from every part of their bodies to "animals with very red-hot heads, very sharp beaks [...], many spikes on their tails [...] and living vipers as tongues."[27] The same Tnugdal saw a wide abyss over a sulfur stream bridged by a long board that was only one foot wide: the souls had to cross it, but the only soul whom he saw succeed was an humble priest.

All this has its antecedents in the Hell of Paul's vision – a place with fiery rivers, run by evil angels, *mali angeli*, of punishment. Most sinners (again many clerics among them: it is surprising how full these hells are with people of the Holy Orders) are somehow immersed in these rivers. But not all: some were "hanging over a river of water and their tongues were dry and fruit was placed

24 *Passio Perpetuae* 4.8; Bastiaensen et al. 1987, 422 remarks that the Greek term expresses "una nota affettuosa."

25 Levison 1910; reading text with Italian translation and notes Ciccarese 1987, 231–75. The vision is dated to 678/9.

26 *Visio Wettini* 11 (Charlemagne), 19 (*in scelere sodomitico*).

27 The Latin text in *Patrologia Latina* 212, 1038–55; Wagner 1882; excerpt in Dinzelbacher 1989, 86–93; for an English translation, see Picard 1989.

within their sight but they were not allowed to take from it." We know where this comes from – though in Paul it is not Tantalos but "those who broke their fast before the appointed hour."

I summarize where we stand. The trips to the Beyond between Paul and Dante had their *raison d'être* in the drive to save souls and to heal human sinfulness. But by doing this, they achieved two other things that became crucial to Dante. By traveling through Hell and Heaven, they confirmed Christian cosmology that assigned to the Devil and Hell a place that was in the end subject to God's power as well (unlike the dualism of many gnostic cosmologies). By describing outstanding sinners as examples of punishment for specific transgressions, they could fulfill personal wishes for accusation and revenge: it is no coincidence that so many high prelates appear with their names in the monastic visions, or that Wetti of Reichenau attacked Charlemagne in a way that prefigures Dante's delight in depicting his political adversaries in specific circles of Hell.

Vergil, *Aeneid* Book VI

Paul's Vision was one reference text for Dante, Vergil's *Aeneid* was the other: Dante tried to refuse the descent with the argument that he was neither Paul nor Aeneas. But then he went, and thus in some sense became Paul and Aeneas together. It is tempting to read Paul as Dante's indicator of content, as a symbol for the Christian, eschatological contents of the *Divina Commedia*, and Aeneas as pointing to the formal, poetical aims of Dante's poem. Almost all medieval travel narratives are in prose; one successful exception is Walahfrid Strabo's version of Wetti's vision, a hexametrical poem that is again shaped by Vergilian poetry: this then would confirm this assumption, as does the choice of Vergil, "source of all language," as the guide through *Inferno*: Dante has to explain why he changed the narration from the traditional prose to the unusual poetry. But this might be too neat and simplistic: *Aeneid* VI is a source for content as well.

Of course, *Aeneid* VI has a very different motivation from Dante's poem. On the narrative surface, Aeneas wants to visit Hades in order to see his father: this is why he asks the Cumaean Sibyl to help him after she had prophesied his future[28] – and in a neat inversion of Dante's hesitations, he claims that he can easily do what other heroes did: Orpheus, Herakles, Theseus, or Pollux.[29] With

28 Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.103–23.

29 Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.119–23.

the rather obvious comment that "it is easy to descend to the Underworld, to come back is the problem," the Sibyl orders him to obtain the golden bough, then she would help him.[30] This is how Aeneas acquires a more than human Underworld guide, the ancestor of the angels who guide the Christian visionaries, and of Dante's Vergil – or rather one of the ancestors, since there are guiding angels in the Jewish apocalypses that I will skip here, which opens up the tricky question of what Vergil knew: Jewish apocalypticism formed part of the same Hellenistic world to which some of the other texts that influenced Vergil's description belonged.[31] Clarity is not to be had, but an absolute separation of the cultures is not convincing.

With the bough, they set out, after an initial prayer by the narrator that makes clear that there is more at stake than filial piety. The narrator prays to the "gods who rule over the souls and to Chaos and Phlegethon" to grant him the permission to talk about things hidden in deep darkness and known to him only by hearing.[32] This, then, is not just a tale about a son's love, but a revelatory text about something that the revealing author himself knows only from hearsay: the poet reports what the tradition has told him, without claiming to guarantee its absolute truth.[33] This opens two ways of understanding the poet: either he is utterly convinced that tradition guarantees truth much better than a claim to personal revelation, or he feels the need to distance himself from such an authoritative claim. Past readers accepted both: the pre-Romantic Christian Gottlob Heyne was deeply impressed by the emotional impact of these lines, whereas the grammarian Servius saw poetic license mixed into Vergil's words.[34] The unreliability of the account seems to me confirmed at the very end of the book, when Aeneas exits by the gate of ivory: it is the gate through which false dreams visit humans.[35] The author is much less reliable than Dante thought when he selected him as the equivalent of the Apollonian

30 Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.125–54: *facilis descensus Averno* (l. 126), *sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras, / hoc opus, hic labor est* (ll. 128–29).

31 On the Jewish apocalypses see Himmelfarb 1983 and Himmelfarb 1993.

32 Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.264–68: *Di, quibus imperium est animarum, umbraeque silentes | et Chaos et Phlegethon, loca nocte tacentia late,| sit mihi fas audita loqui, sit numine vestro | pandere res alta terra et caligine mersas.*

33 Norden (1927, 208) compares Apollonios of Rhodes, *Argonautika* 4.1379–80 and adds: "Es ist begreiflich, dass gerade transzendente Offenbarungspoesie [...] gern als überliefert hingestellt wurde."

34 Heyne and Wunderlich 1816, 938: *habet insignem vim ad animos excitandos et horrore quodam sacro imbuendos*; Servius ad Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.266: *de alta dicturus prudentia miscet poeticam licentiam.*

35 Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.893–99.

Sibyl as a guide. But Dante and his Vergil do not have to exit through such an ambivalent gateway: their Christian path leads them easily to the upper world and its starry sky (the last verse of the *Inferno* is "And hence we came out to see again the stars") and to the visual pleasures that open the *Purgatorio*.[36]

More intriguingly even, the two poems allot a different emphasis to the punitive horrors and cruelties of the Underworld. Far from being as central as Dante makes them in the *Inferno*, Vergil radically removes them from Aeneas' sight and turns them into something that not only the narrator but even his hero are only told about. Once the Sibyl has persuaded Charon to ferry them over (a scene that will have verbatim echoes in Dante, but where Dante is miraculously moved over the river in deep sleep),[37] they meet groups of unhappy dead; but their only punishment for not having been exemplary humans is mostly just this, to be wretchedly unhappy. Worse fates are presented only indirectly: the egregious sinners, be it in groups or as mythological individuals such as Ixion or Tantalos, are shut away behind a triple wall surrounded by the fiery Pyriphlegethon, in the power of Rhadamanthys and his hench-woman Tisiphone whom Aeneas sees on a watch-tower cracking her whip; otherwise he only hears their wailing and the noise of whips and chains. It is the Sibyl who tells a visibly unnerved Aeneas about this place that she once visited when she was introduced into her position.[38]

Cognitively, the reality of such tales feels even more removed; aesthetically, the serenity of Vergil's narrative does not tolerate the almost perverse delight in the gruesome details that we find in most later tales. But it is less a matter of style or worldview than a consequence of the fact that the Underworld visit is part of the much wider epic narrative of Aeneas, his travels and his tribulations in Italy. At the outset of Book VI, the Sibyl foretold Aeneas's fate in Italy, outlining the six books to come; and this story line is continued well into Rome's present when Anchises presents Rome's future leaders.[39] On the other hand, the underwordly meeting with "unhappy Dido" (456: *infelix Dido*) gives the final closure to the

36 Dante, *Inferno* 34.139: *E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.*

37 Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.298–416. Vergil's comparison of the dead souls to the autumn leaves and the birds collecting for migration (6.309–14) is echoed in *Inferno* 3.112–17. But Dante inverts Vergil's image of Charon's boat made of skins (*sutilis*) that "groans under the weight (of Aeneas and the Sibyl) and catches much water through its cracks" (6.413–14) by making Charon proclaim that Dante needs "a much lighter craft," *più leve legno* (3.93), foreshadowing the transition in *Purgatorio* 3.19–51.

38 Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.548–627.

39 Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.83–97 (the Sibyl's prophecy), 756–886 (the Roman heroes), with a coda in which Anchises explains the waiting troubles in Italy, 888–92.

Dido narrative of Book IV and is so relentlessly grim because it helps to characterize the ethical ambiguity of Aeneas' mission on which Book IV dwells at some length; but also, more on the surface, to provide an eschatological explanation of the Punic Wars. Unlike in the Christian tales (or, for that matter, in Plato, as we shall see) there is no reformist zeal in the horrors of the Underworld; their narrative can and should not outdo the narrative of the horrors humans inflict on each other, either when conquering Troy or when fighting in Italy. There is then a deeply humanist coloring in Vergil's narration, as befits an Epicurean. If there is ethical zeal in Vergil's Underworld – beyond the one time normativity of Phlegyas' eternal admonishment to "Learn justice from being warned and not to despise the gods"[40] – it is mostly in Anchises' narration of the transmigration of souls of which we hear when in Elysium, and there the ethical purpose is deeply embedded in the origins of the doctrine with the Pythagoreans and Empedokles. It is in line with this serenity that we learn much more about the Vale of the Blessed where Anchises can be found than about Tartaros, and about the purification of the souls and their reincarnation. In the same way as Beatrice becomes Dante's guide in Paradiso, Anchises takes over in Elysium. But the reason is as different as possible: not because the Sibyl would not have access to Elysium, but because Aeneas's father is the much better guide to what is the essential political message of this Descent, the revelation of Rome's destiny through its future leaders, down to Augustus.

One of the constant characteristics of these travel narrations is the reference to the traditions in which they stand. Dante referred back to Paul, Aeneas and Vergil, and several of the medieval prose narrations pointed back to Gregory's *Dialogues*. Vergil too alludes to the tradition in which he writes. When Charon tries to stop Aeneas from entering his boat, he refers back to Herakles, Theseus and Peirithous who brought only trouble – so why should he ferry over Aeneas? Herakles refers not only back to the task of bringing up Kerberos for Eurystheus, but to a poem in which this was narrated, a *katabasis* of Herakles of which scholars have found echoes in early fifth century literature and whose fame induced Aristophanes to disguise Dionysos as Herakles in the Underworld trip in the *Frogs*. A similar story must have been told in a *Theseis*; Herakles' *katabasis* must also have told how Herakles freed Theseus from the ignominious capture in Hades.[41]

When Aeneas and the Sibyl arrive in the beautiful meadows of the blessed, they see them all enjoying their own sunlight and spending eternity in games,

40 Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.620: *discite iustitiam moniti et non temnere divos*.

41 On Greek heroes and *katabasis*, see Clark 1979 and especially Calvo Martínez 2000, 67–78 (with a catalog of the heroes involved).

song and dance, with “the Thracian singer” playing his music for them. When they need to know where Anchises is, they obtain this information from “the pious poets” (*pii vates*) and especially the most outstanding among them, Mousaios. The first passage is a deft allusion to the late Archaic *katabasis* or *Katabaseis* of Orpheus with their image of eternal sun, flowery meadows, their contests and dances.[42] The latter is more complex. It should have caused some surprise that among the poets in Elysium, it is not Homer but Mousaios who stands out, despite Vergil’s aim with his *Aeneid* to outdo, as his biographer said, “both poems of Homer”: Mousaios is relevant for Elysium as well and another allusion to the background of this part of Book VI. Four decades ago, I tried to show that he represents an Athenian strain of Underworld narratives with the aim to explain the eschatological expectations of the Eleusinian initiates; but I hesitate to think that Vergil alludes to a specific *katabasis* poem.[43] I rather understand the presence both of the unnamed Orpheus and of Mousaios as Vergil’s marker for the wider origin of the complex of “the realm of the blessed” (the *sedes beatae*, a Latin rendering of the common Greek term εὐσεβῶν χῶρος, found both in the gold tablets and in grave epigrams) and the transmigration of the soul in, generally speaking, Orphic Underworld poetry, in an even vaguer sense than Eduard Norden has assumed in his celebrated commentary.

The Orphic and Pythagorean Underworld Complex

This leads to the most fragmentary and least well-known part of my narrative, the Orphic and Pythagorean Underworld complex of the sixth and early fifth centuries BCE. We have come to call it Orphic because its best known exponent was a *katabasis* poem ascribed to Orpheus; and we call it at the same time Pythagorean because already Herodotos claimed that some beliefs about the Beyond were close to Orphic and Dionysiac ideas “that were in reality Egyptian and Pythagorean”; not much later, Ion of Chios, Herodotos’ younger contemporary, claims that “Pythagoras wrote some poems and attributed them to Orpheus,” and the fourth-century author Epigenes adds that Orpheus’ *katabasis* poem was in reality the work of an Italian Pythagorean.[44] At least in the

42 For an overview, see West 1983 and Graf 2011.

43 Graf 1974 and 2008.

44 *Katabasis* poem: an overview in Bernabé 2005, 262–66; the ancient titles nos. 707T–711T. Herodotos 2.81.2 = fr. 650F Bernabé 2005; Ion of Chios 36 B 2 Diels-Kranz = 506T Bernabé 2005; Epigenes in Clemens, *Stromateis* 1.21.131.3 = fr. 1128T Bernabé 2005; the material is collected in Bernabé 2005, 84–92.

area of travels to the Beyond, the two spheres overlapped already for later fifth century observers.

'Poem', as we have learned in the last fifty years, is the wrong term. I find it easier to think of these late Archaic and early Classical poems as a constantly shifting kaleidoscope of combinations of hexameters and myths that at specific moments condensed into a poem, such as the short *Theogony* in the Papyrus of Derveni that had a ritual function; longer theogonical poems must have coexisted with and pre-existed this theogony. This explains why both Euripides and Plato talk about a vague mass of books, a "smoke" or "babble" (καπνός and ὁμαδός).[45] Hellenistic scholarship then turned this into single books of which not only the Byzantine lexicon *Suda* but already Orpheus in his *Argonautika*, an apocryphal poem of perhaps the second century CE, can give a catalog that contains, among others, a report of what he himself had seen during his travels, his descent into Hades and his visit of Egyptian Memphis – which must mean eschatology on the one hand, magic or theurgy on the other.[46] If we take this seriously, it also means that these Underworld reports were first-person narrations by the visitor of the Underworld, like Paul's prose or Dante's poem, but unlike Vergil's epic with its changing voices where a narrator who inserts himself into the prologue reports not only Aeneas' experience but also the words of the Sibyl and of Anchises.[47]

Details of this late Archaic "babble" are scarce.[48] Extensive descriptions of the Realm of the Blessed must have been part of it, with details such as a perpetual spring, eternal flowers and green meadows on which the blessed souls could sing, dance, and have their athletic contests. These details appear both in Pindar's *Second Olympian Ode* for Theron of Akragas in 476 BCE and in the song of the Eleusinian initiates in Aristophanes' *Frogs* of 405 BCE;[49] in the following century, some of these details reappear in the gold tablets from Thurioi in Southern Italy. The background of the *Second Olympian* is vague but must be somehow connected with Sicilian Pythagoreanism; Aristophanes explicitly reflects ideas that his audience would connect with the Eleusinian mysteries, and the Thurioi tablets are either Pythagorean or Bacchic or both.[50] This places

45 Euripides, *Hippylotos* 938–57 = Orpheus, fr. 627, Bernabé 2005. Plato, *Republic* 364e.

46 Suidas, s.v. Orpheus; Orpheus, *Argoautika* 12–35.

47 Cf. West 1983, 12: "Probably a poem in autobiographical form."

48 See esp. Edmonds 2004.

49 Pindar, *Olympian* 2.109–48; Aristophanes, *Frogs* 324–53.

50 *Second Olympic*: already the Scholia vetera connected the eschatology with Pythagoras, 104c (ἔνιοί φασι, "some say"), 106a, 123a, 123d (Πυθαγόρας […] ᾧι νῦν ὁ Πίνδαρος ἀκολουθεῖ, "Pythagoras […] whom Pindar is following"). Modern scholars have debated this without a clear result; Zuntz 1972, 86–87 is too apodictic. Thurioi, Graf and Johnston 2012,

these specific details at the intersection of Demeter and Dionysos mysteries with Pythagorean lore, which again points to Orpheus and/or Mousaios. In a report from Hellenistic times, we perceive a garbled account of a *katabasis* that connects Pythagoras with his mother or rather, as Walter Burkert has pointed out, with *Mētēr*, the Great Mother; Herodotos ascribes a similar story to Zalmoxis, the former Thracian slave of Pythagoras.[51]

Reincarnation is not only important in the report on the fate of the souls that Vergil's Anchises gives, but also in one of the Thurioi tablets and in the story that Plato tells at the end of the *Republic*, where he reports the travel to the Beyond that a certain Er, a Pamphylian soldier, experienced as a near-death experience, neatly foreshadowing the many near-death experiences of the medieval narrations.[52] But unlike the very serious Christian authors, Plato plays with the fictionality of his story. Er, presumed dead in battle but waking up again on the twelfth day when his pyre started to burn, saw the Meadow of Judgment where Minos sorted the souls into good and bad and sent each batch to a temporary location from where they returned purified and fit for reincarnation, with only the very bad souls locked away for eternal punishment by fiery men. This sounds like Vergil's walled prison for eternal sinners; the basic dichotomy of good and bad souls was expressed in the Pythagorean symbol Ypsilon where the letter stood for the way of the souls whose path branched at the place of judgment. Such an Ypsilon has been inscribed on a grave relief from Lydian Philadelphia that is dated to the early Imperial age and refers in its text explicitly to Pythagoras of Samos: this points to a background of Orphic/Pythagorean eschatological poetry and its reception by popular morality.[53] Later in his trip, Er sees his fellow souls choosing their next incarnation. The passage contains some Platonic jokes but, in the end, again harkens back to standard Pythagorean

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nos. 3, 5–7; "Orphic" already for their first editor, Domenico Comparetti, Graf and Johnston 2012, 52–55; "Orphico-Pythagorean" the first German interpreter, Albrecht Dieterich, ibid. 55; the vagueness has remained, and a lot depends on whether one is willing to assume that Pythagoreans used ritual texts ascribed to Orpheus.

51 For Pythagoras' *katabasis* after Hieronymos of Rhodes and Hermippos, see Burkert 1972, 155–61; Zalmoxis Herodotos 4.94, see Burkert 1972, 156.

52 Reincarnation: Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.713–51; Thurioi tablet: Graf and Johnston 2012, no. 5, see also no. 3; Plato, *Republic* 10.614b–621b.

53 The ancient literary passages (Persius, *Satires* 3.56–57, with scholion; Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* 6.3, with reference to Vergil, *Aeneid* 6; add Isidor of Sevil, *Etymologica* 1.3.7) on the Pythagorean Y already in Dieterich 1913, 192; for the relief Keil and von Premerstein 1908, 34, no. 55, and Merkelbach and Stauber 1998, 04/24/02; a thorough discussion in Petzl 1992, 1–5.

teaching, and Plato's Socrates draws ethical conclusions from this, "to hold fast ever to the heavenly way and follow after justice and virtue always, considering that the soul is immortal and able to endure every sort of good and every sort of evil."[54]

This is the first time ever we see a report on a travel to the Beyond to instill good behavior in the interest of one's immortal soul. Earlier in the *Republic*, Plato cited a cruder form of this moral teaching: Mousaios and his son, he claimed there, promise to the just an eternal "banquet of the pure" (συμπόσιον τῶν ὁσίων) in the afterlife, "making eternal drunkenness the reward for virtue."[55] This means that the use of these stories to inculcate moral behavior is not Plato's idea but again goes back to the same world of mysteries and esoteric travelogues of which Mousaios is just one exponent and where both the terms δίκαιοι and ὅσιοι, "just" and "pure," are applied to initiates made also morally better by the rite. We do not know which mystery rites were in the background, but we remember that in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, the foundational text of the Eleusinian mysteries, Persephone is promised the rule over the dead and the punishment of the unjust who would not perform her cult: already here cultic and ethical behavior overlap.[56]

Homer's *Nekyia*

It was not, however, a *katabasis* of Orpheus or Herakles that was Vergil's foremost source of inspiration, but the Homeric *Nekyia*, Book 11 of the *Odyssey* – the most difficult and most controversial round trip to Hades in my entire corpus.[57] The problems begin already with the question of whether this is really a trip to Hades, or where the trip to the netherworld begins, or whether in the history of the text a different Homeric story was turned into a trip to Hades. This calls for a close reading of the text.

The trip is not of Odysseus' choosing. When he is ready to set out from Kirke's island on his way home, Kirke advises him on his future course to sail home: "But first, you must sail another route and go to the house of Hades and awesome Persephone, in order to consult the ghost of Teiresias of Thebes, the

54 Plato, *Republic* 10.612c.

55 Plato, *Republic* 2.363c–d.

56 *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 364–69.

57 On the Homeric *Nekyia*, see also the contribution by Ekroth in this volume.

blind seer, whose mind is still strong."[58] Formulated like this, it sounds like a visit to the Underworld, and Odysseus' crew almost panics at this prospect. But Kirke specified that the spot, although in the "dark house of Hades," was a place "where Pyriphlegethon and Kokytos flow into Acheron that is an outflow of the waters of Styx, and there is a rock at the junction of the two roaring rivers."[59] This then, although technically inside Hades' realm, is still at the very outer border of it, on our side of the rivers.

Odysseus's own description in the following book confirms this. They set out north on Okeanos to the land of the Kimmerians, beach their ship and walk "along the stream Okeanos" until they reach the spot that "Kirke had described."[60] There they dig a pit, sacrifice to all the dead and bleed two black sheep, a ram and a ewe. The blood attracts a crowd of dead souls who "assemble out of Erebos";[61] single souls "came" (ἦλθεν); and at the end Teiresias explicitly "went back to the house of Hades," as Achilles, Ajax and Herakles do much later.[62] At the end of his narration, Odysseus becomes afraid that Persephone will "send up" the monster Gorgo; he "went" to the ship and sailed off along the Okeanos.[63] Throughout the narration, then, Odysseus is at the outer periphery of Hades, in easy walking distance of his ship; there are nasty surprises inside that might come out and which Odysseus tries to avoid.

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58 Homer, *Odyssey* 10.490–93: ἀλλ' ἄλλην χρὴ πρῶτον ὁδὸν τελέσαι καὶ ἱκέσθαι | εἰς Ἀίδαο δόμους καὶ ἐπαινῆς Περσεφονείης, | ψυχῆι χρησομένους Θηβαίου Τειρεσίαο, | μάντηος ἀλαοῦ, τοῦ τε φρένες ἔμπεδοί εἰσι.

59 The geographical details in Homer, *Odyssey* 10.513–15: ἔνθα μὲν εἰς Ἀχέροντα Πυριφλεγέθων τε ῥέουσιν | Κώκυτός θ', ὃς δὴ Στυγὸς ὕδατός ἐστιν ἀπορρώξ, | πέτρη τε ξύνεσίς τε δύω ποταμῶν ἐριδούπων.

60 Homer, *Odyssey* 11.21–22: αὐτοὶ δ' αὖτε παρὰ ῥόον Ὠκεανοῖο | ἤιομεν, ὄφρ' ἐς χῶρον ἀφικόμεθ', ὃν φράσε Κίρκη.

61 Homer, *Odyssey* 11.36–37: αἱ δ' ἀγέροντο | ψυχαὶ ὑπὲξ Ἐρέβευς νεκύων κατατεθνηώτων; see also *Od.* 11.83.

62 ἦλθε Elpenor: Homer, *Odyssey* 11.51, Antikleia *Odyssey* 11.84. Teiresias *Odyssey* 11.90, etc. At the end: Teiresias *Odyssey* 11.151–52 (ὣς φαμένη ψυχὴ μὲν ἔβη δόμον Ἄϊδος εἴσω | Τειρεσίαο ἄνακτος); similar *Odyssey* 1.627 (Herakles: ὁ μὲν αὖτις ἔβη δόμον Ἄϊδος εἴσω, "he went into the house of Hades"); a different verse for Ajax *Odyssey* 11.563–564 (βῆ δὲ μετ' ἄλλας | ψυχὰς εἰς Ἔρεβος νεκύων κατατεθνηώτων, "he went to the other souls in Erebos, of deceased people) and for Achilles", Homer, *Odyssey* 11.539 (φοίτα μακρὰ βιβᾶσα κατ' ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα, "(the soul) went stepping wide over the asphodel meadow" – something that Odysseus can see even from his own position).

63 Homer, *Odyssey* 11.634–35: μή μοι Γοργείην κεφαλὴν δεινοῖο πελώρου | ἐξ Ἀίδεω πέμψειεν ἀγαυὴ Περσεφόνεια; 636 ἐπὶ νῆα κιών.

Back to the story of Odysseus' encounters with the souls. First comes the shadow of Odysseus' comrade Elpenor, who died on Kirke's island and cannot proceed further without being buried; Odysseus laments him and promises a burial. In his Palinurus story, Vergil will take this up, with sharper topographical precision. In Vergil's reading, Aeneas is in the no man's land between here and there, and Palinurus is part of the throng of souls who push to reach Charon's boat, but unlike Aeneas who, after meeting Palinurus, walks on to confront Charon, Odysseus stays, seated at his pit and guarding the blood with his sword, visited by some souls and seeing others pass by.[64]

Unlike all later Beyonds, Homer's is a uniformly dark and dank place, populated by weak souls, with a few exceptions that have caused headaches to scholars. There is Minos "with a golden staff, setting the law for the dead," and in contrast to the royal judge the giant and rough Orion, still hunting, and the three transgressors Tityos, Tantalos and Sisyphos who are eternally punished.[65] At the end, he spots the figure of Herakles, or, as Odysseus corrects himself, Herakles' *eidōlon*, "replica"; the real person (αὐτὸς) enjoys life among the Olympians as husband of Hebe.[66]

I do not follow earlier scholars who read the mythical sinners as later interpolations into the text, both because they assumed an evolution of ethics and because the narrator changed his perspective – earlier in the song, the dead visit Odysseus, later he is seeing them, presumably as a visitor in the Underworld. For one, these sinners are not different from Minos, Orion, or even Herakles' replica; Tityos, Tantalos and Sisyphos cannot be singled out. In addition, their story has no ethical, even less a reformist pathos – they are far from the sinners in Vergil's or Dante's Beyond. There is some justice and punishment in Hades, as we already saw in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*; to construct an ethical evolution from weak ghosts to punished sinners is thus not convincing. Nor is the formal argument convincing. Indeed, Odysseus tells us that he "saw" them without telling that they "came," unlike in the case of the famous heroines who came (ἤλυθον) as a group, but whom Odysseus then "saw" individually (ἴδον or variations).[67] But this does not necessarily imply a change of narrative perspective. Minos, Orion, Tityos, Tantalos and Sisyphos are tied to a specific locality in the Underworld and

64 Homer, *Odyssey* 11.51–84; Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.337–83.

65 Homer, *Odyssey* 11.568–600.

66 Herakles in Homer, *Odyssey* 11.602–27; the self-correction at the beginning, using the verse end as a marker: τὸν δὲ μετ' εἰσενόησα βίην Ἡρακληείην, | εἴδωλον: αὐτὸς δὲ μετ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι | τέρπεται.

67 ἤλυθον 226; ἴδον 235, 260, 266, 271, 321, 339; εἶδον 281. 288; ἔσιδον 306.

cannot "come": but Odysseus is able to spot them from where he is – whereas the *eidōlon* of Herakles, although introduced by "I saw," at the end, after a discussion with Odysseus, "went into the house of Hades."

These stories thus introduce the superhero Odysseus as someone who pushes the borders of human experience to the very limit: he progresses to the very last point of his world from which he will be able to return. And the text is used as a parade of mythical narratives, many of them allusions, that Homer's audience should recognize: this is why we hear about the heroines who died prematurely, and this is why only in Tityos' case the narrator even bothers to tell us what he did to land in his uncomfortable position; for Tantalos and Sisyphos, we are supposed to know the story ourselves. All this is known, including the three *theomachoi*, those who challenged the gods. With a fine sensitivity, Vergil will add the most ridiculous one, the Thessalian king Salmoneus who raced around with a clanging chariot and threw torches to play Zeus.[68] Odysseus, whose own voice narrates his visit to the limits of existence, is also a great storyteller – as king Alcinous insists during the interlude in Odysseus' narration: Odysseus, Alcinous tells us, is not a liar and swindler but told his story like a professional bard.[69] Homer takes advantage of the Underworld journey and its potential of hindsight to rethink epic values, not unlike the Christian travel stories that did the same. But whereas this rethinking of accepted societal values is the aim that drives these later stories, in the *Nekyia* it is a detail, albeit an important one.

Unlike the later travelogues, the *Nekyia* does not refer back to its predecessors; when it looks outside of itself, it looks at the narrative tradition that the audience of an epic singer would know from other performances. This is part of Homer's way of constructing his poem and selling it to his audience: when there is depth in time, it is a depth that looks back at a tradition through the life of its heroes: such are, for example, Nestor's tales about his youthful exploits.[70] We, however, can look for such a past, and it leads us to the Bronze Age and to Mesopotamian storytelling.

Gilgamesh and the Underworld

This means mainly the epic poem of Gilgamesh, whose canonical form we know through a large number of copies from seventh-century Niniveh but that was

68 Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.585–94.

69 Homer, *Odyssey* 11.363–76.

70 Homer, *Iliad* 7.132–56 and 11.669–761.

already read in Late Bronze Age Hittite Boghazköy and Egyptian Tell-el-Amarna.[71] There are other stories about the Underworld, such as Ishtar and Ereshkigal, but they all play out on the level of divine myth; as far as I can see, humans enter only in the Gilgamesh cycle.

Gilgamesh never travels to the Underworld. When he leaves the world of human experience, he sails across the sea to the island of Utnapishtim, the Flood Hero, driven by the loss of his close friend Enkidu to acquire the herb of eternal life – which he then again on the way back loses to the snake: it is the etiological myth for human mortality caused, as in the Old Testament, by the trickster snake.[72] Gilgamesh' story is narrated on eleven tablets. In the canonical Babylonian version, the scribe and editor added a twelfth tablet on the Underworld that has no clear narrative connection with the rest of the story, but is an Akkadian translation from a longer self-contained Sumerian narrative, "Bilgamesh and the Underworld."[73] The excerpt has cut away all the narrative framework of the Sumerian original in order to focus on the central narrative that tells how the beloved plaything or musical instrument (translators are uncertain here) of Gilgamesh – or Bilgamesh, as the Sumerian text calls him – fell into the Underworld, how then Enkidu (still alive, although he died on tablet 7 of the Babylonian version) offered to fetch it, and how through a hole in the ground "the spirit of Enkidu came out of the earth like a gust of wind."[74] Gilgamesh embraced him and then interviewed him on what Enkidu had been seeing in the Underworld from which he physically could not return anymore.

Like the Homeric Underworld, Enkidu's is monotonous and depressing: "if I tell you the Earth's conditions that I found," says Enkidu, "you would sit and weep." But unlike in Homer's, there is a hierarchy of deceased, ranged according to the number of sons a man had: the more sons, the more comfortable one's afterlife is: from the father of one who "weeps bitterly" to the one with seven sons "who sits on a throne among the junior deities":[75] the more children one has, the richer and more lasting will one's grave cult and its sacrifices be. Other groups are singled out as well, again with reference to the grave cult – those who died young are compensated

71 See George 2003; recent translations George 1999; Dalley 2000; and Foster, Frayne and Beckman 2001. On parallels between Near Eastern and Homeric eschatological ideas, see West 1997, 151–67.

72 A Greek variation in Ibykos, fr. 142, and Sophocles, fr. 362.

73 See Dalley 2000, 120–25; the Sumerian text is translated in George 1999, 175–95.

74 I follow the translation of Dalley 2000; the Sumerian text is somewhat different.

75 The Sumerian translation from George 1999, 188; the Akkadian text is too damaged to yield good sense.

with fresh water; those who died in war are constantly mourned and tended at their grave, those who received a nomad's grave remain errant and restless even in death, and those whom their relatives neglected "eat trash that no other man wants." This boils down to an instruction about the relationship between afterlife and grave cult, and an admonition to make sure during one's life that there will be cult after death. It fits that the Sumerian hero Bilgamesh was connected with grave cult.[76]

All this looks very different from Homer. However, there are parallels, both in the framework and at least in one detail. As Martin West has pointed out, the overall construction of the netherworld in the Gilgamesh poem (or, for that matter, in other Babylonian narrations on the Beyond) is comparable: it is a world of darkness and dankness, understood as the house of the Underworld god and the abode where souls are sent to – there is thus a family resemblance that ties the Homeric Underworld and its successors into a wider Near Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean way of thinking about the world of the dead.[77] But scholars have also isolated one detail that might show that the Homeric tradition more specifically knew of tablet 12 of the Gilgamesh poem.[78] When Enkidu's ghost rises through the hole that connects the two worlds and the two friends, they embrace each other. This recalls Odysseus' embrace of his mother at the margin of the Underworld from which her shadow has risen; it also recalls Patroklos' dream apparition in the *Iliad* to remind Achilles of giving him a burial where again the two friends embrace, although in a setting that is less close to the scene from Gilgamesh.[79] There is, however, one crucial difference: while Gilgamesh and Enkidu succeed in their embrace, both Achilles and Odysseus grasp only empty air. The Homeric poem has radically deepened the distance between the living and the dead – as Antikleia explains the general law to her distraught son:

> ἀλλ' αὕτη δίκη ἐστὶ βροτῶν, ὅτε τίς κε θάνῃσιν:
> οὐ γὰρ ἔτι σάρκας τε καὶ ὀστέα ἶνες ἔχουσιν,
> ἀλλὰ τὰ μέν τε πυρὸς κρατερὸν μένος αἰθομένοιο
> δαμνᾷ, ἐπεί κε πρῶτα λίπῃ λεύκ' ὀστέα θυμός,
> ψυχὴ δ' ἠύτ' ὄνειρος ἀποπταμένη πεπότηται.

76 See Dalley 2000, 135, n. 164.

77 West 1997, 151–67.

78 See West 1997, 344–46.

79 Homer, *Odyssey* 11. 204–8; *Iliad* 23.97–104.

> But this is the lot of mortals, when they die: flesh and bones do not have any strength anymore, but the strong force of the burning fire has them destroyed as soon as life has left the white bones, and the soul is flying forth as a dream.[80]

In a similar way, its depiction of the radically anonymous fate of all the dead, with very few exceptions that depend on their former life, has transformed the differentiation of the deceased into classes determined by their former life.

If thus the *Nekyia* must be seen in relation to the Gilgamesh poem, several observations become interesting. One is that already the Enkidu story is a first-person narrative, like Odysseus', Orpheus', Paul's or Dante's – but unlike these later travellers, Enkidu will not come back. And like Gilgamesh who meets Enkidu at the margin of the hole that he made to connect the two worlds, but never enters himself, Odysseus does not enter the Netherworld but is glued to its rim and talks to the souls who pass by. In the light of all later stories in which the hero travels down and somehow comes up again, this is an important Homeric echo of the Sumerian and Babylonian story. One can even wonder to what extent the pit that Odysseus has been digging as a tool to call the souls out of Hades is a distant echo of Gilgamesh's pit through which Enkidu came back.

One final remark. Despite all sorts of problems with fitting the Sumerian narrative into the Babylonian poem, the Niniveh editor of the Gilgamesh epic wanted to have an Underworld story in his narration, and he found a much older text that he simply tagged onto it: it is as if a heroic tale was not felt to be complete if it did not also tell about the world of the dead. This echoes the feeling that the *Nekyia* is rather tagged onto Odysseus' travelogue: there is no practical need why Odysseus should travel there, Kirke is perfectly able to give him all the instruction he needs, and after the trip, Odysseus returns to Kirke's island and continues from there. However, by going to the margins of Hades, Odysseus pushes the limits of human experience much more strongly than Gilgamesh did. Vergil sensed both the possibilities and the technical problems of this and anchored Aeneas' trip much better in his poem's narrative structure.

Concluding Remarks

In guise of a conclusion at the end of a very long trip through times and cultures, I will, for brevity's sake, end with four short observations or theses.

80 Homer, *Odyssey* 11.118–22.

First, reports on the netherworld and afterlife tend to be in the first person, starting with Enkidu's. They are eye-witness reports, and even when reported in the third person, as in Plato's Er myth or in the stories of Wetti or Tnugdal, the narrator insists on the eyewitness whose story he reproduces. In this, the only exception is the *Aeneid*. But even Vergil is aware of this dimension when he claims that he is about to report things he has heard, *audita loqui*. This is a consequence of the narrative constraint that in ordinary life nobody comes back to tell about the thereafter, and that the exception has always to be a very personal experience that cannot be matched by other experience – with all the problems of reliability.

Second, this is a tradition that is highly self-conscious of its traditional character. From Aristophanes' *Frogs* onwards, narrators refer back to important reports. Mostly, this is a strategy to underpin reliability: even when it is an individual's voice and experience that nobody can really check and report back, it echoes with earlier reports. Other strategies for creating reliability are much more rare, such as the insistence on prophetic gift in Paul's case (and the story of how his report was found in a chest in his house that was confirmed by none other than Emperor Theodosios); Vergil's choice of the Sibyl rests on another prophetic claim. Odysseus, the compulsory liar and shifty hero, feels isolated in this world that aims for truth; his role (with all its awkwardness) is due to the place of the *Nekyia* in the tradition, just after the narration by Enkidu who is not a prophet either. This is why, in a pause in the narration, the poet has Alcinous stress Odysseus' high reliability.

Third, the self-consciousness of having predecessors argues in favor of seeing these stories as a genre of their own, despite the shift from poetry to prose between Vergil and Paul; this shift is due to the influence of Jewish apocalypses. We saw how Vergilian hexameters return in the Middle Ages in Walahfrid Strabo's poem on Wetti; and of course Dante fully returns to the poetic form. It has been recognized long ago that in early Greece, hexameter poems that refer back to the inspiration of the Muses claimed much higher authority than prose texts that expose ideas to a wider democratic discussion. In a changed world, Vergil and Dante still take this up.

Fourth, from the very beginning, stories about the afterlife do not cater to pure curiosity, as do other traveller's reports already in antiquity. Rather, the gaze on the other world usually has the aim to change our life in this world, starting with Enkidu's list of souls with a fate that depends on their human life and that, at least in the categorization according to the number of sons, advertises the advantage of a large and harmonious family. Only the *Nekyia* is curiously reticent on consequences for the life of the audience members, if one does not want to read Achilles' rejection of his own heroism in this sense.

But the aristocratic warrior elite in Homer really had no choice of life-style – Odysseus, who would have preferred to remain on Ithaka and cultivate his fields, is pulled into the war against his will. The radical change in attitudes happens with the texts ascribed to Orpheus and Mousaios: suddenly the fate of one's soul or, in the closely connected Pythagorean reincarnation theories, of one's next earthly life, is dependent on one's behavior during one's earthly life. Reasons for this change are debated and not always clear; the older German idea of "die Entdeckung des Individuums" is too Romantic, and does not really explain the reasons behind this shift. One should reckon with a bundle of socio-economic factors that include the rise of a merchant class at the expense of the aristocratic warriors: these merchants were in need of new values but also experienced more than the warrior aristocrat how important it was to be in charge of one's own ethical life. The success of religious entrepreneurs, Plato's "seers and begging priests" who relied on a host of books by Orpheus and Mousaios, depended on these needs and reinforced the shift.

Nor is there a good answer to the question of how the Greeks arrived at the concept of Underworld punishments and not just at that of rewards in the afterlife for outstanding individuals; there is no systemic reason for such a change. Rewards, which created a dichotomy between the miserable fate of everybody and the bliss of some morally outstanding humans, seem to have been somewhat earlier and not originally the consequence of punishment: the promises at the end of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* differentiate only between the better fate of the initiates and that of everybody else; and the same is also implied in the special fate of Menelaos, the son-in-law of Zeus, of which the *Odyssey* knows. Like tourist class on airplanes, the Underworld is bad enough, and upgrading is the only way out; Empedokles' poem still preserves such a state of affairs in which the reward for the good soul is a slow progress towards permanent divine status. The presence of punishment means that ritual and ethical categories, initiation and right life, were inextricably connected, perhaps as the result of religious propaganda that found banning the uninitiated into eternal discomfort a useful propaganda tool.

A smaller change is the rise of these ugly and violent fiery men who torture the soul: they make a fleeting appearance in Plato's myth of Er and come back with force in the Pseudo-Platonic *Axiochos*;[81] Hermann Diels once argued for Iranian influence, and he might be right.[82] We meet them also in Jewish apocalypses, and the Jews could have met them in Babylon – for example, an important influence on Paul's Vision that I have left out, the *Apocalypse of Peter*

81 (Pseudo-)Plato, *Axiochos* 371a–72a.

82 Diels 1915, 19–23 (on col. 9).

(a text dated to about 135 CE), describes in loving detail how sinners are punished in holes of boiling mud or snake pits, and how "punishing angels" or "evil demons" inflict pain on them.[83] In a milder form, they are present in the Greek tradition as well: Apulian Underworld vases depict Furies with whips next to Sisyphos and Tantalos, and Vergil introduces Tisiphone in a bloody cloak.[84]

Many questions still remain open in the history of this fascinating literary genre that reaches from the Bronze Age Near East to early modern Europe and beyond – but it should have become clear why I consciously chose the term 'genre' and not the more vague 'motif' or 'narrative topic': starting in late early Christianity, if not already in Hellenistic Judaism, the narrations coalesce into a clearly recognizable and unique group of texts that are no longer embedded in longer narrations, as they were in Gilgamesh, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*. Otherwise, this brief overview is intended not so much to propose certainties as to offer new interpretations and stimulate questions in a field that has remained underexplored.

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83 On this work, see Bremmer 1998.

84 On Apulian vases, see Aellen 1994; for Tisiphone, see Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.555–56.

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CHAPTER 3

Hades, Homer and the Hittites

The Cultic-Cultural Context of Odysseus' 'Round Trip' to the Underworld

Gunnel Ekroth

One* of the most well-known round trips to Hades in antiquity is found in Book 11 of Homer's *Odyssey*.[1] The section, often labelled the *Nekyia*, tells of how Odysseus travels to the land of the Kimmerians at the outskirts of the world, which lies in eternal darkness, in order to consult the dead seer Teiresias to learn how he is to find his way back to Ithaka. Odysseus arrives at a lonely and deserted place where the rivers of the Underworld flow into Okeanos. Here he digs a hole in the riverbank, performs libations and sacrifices two black sheep, letting their blood flow into a pit so that Teiresias and other souls of the departed can drink and answer questions. The first dead person he encounters is his comrade Elpenor, followed by his mother Antikleia. Eventually Teiresias shows up, drinks of the blood and gives the required information as well as explains how Odysseus is to propitiate Poseidon who is preventing his return. Teiresias also reveals that any soul that is allowed to drink of the blood will reveal the truth to Odysseus. Next follows a visit from 14 famous heroines who tell their stories and the encounter with three illustrious heroes of the Trojan War: Agamemnon, Achilles and Ajax. Then Hades opens up, and Odysseus is offered a glimpse of the topography of the realm of the dead, including Minos on his throne and Tityos, Tantalos and Sisyphos being punished. The *eidōlon* of Herakles makes an appearance and finally, when the souls of the dead press on, Odysseus fears that Persephone will even send upon him the head of the Gorgon, so he decides to leave.

Although usually referred to as a *katabasis*, a descent into the Underworld, Odysseus' journey does not really constitute a visit to Hades as he does not go down and come back up again.[2] In this sense, Odysseus' round trip differs from that of other Greek mythical heroes who actually had to enter Hades, since

* I would like to thank Susanne Berndt and Scott Scullion for valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

1 Homer, *Odyssey* 11.1–640.

2 Although Pausanias, in his description of Polygnotos' *Nekyia* painting in the *leschē* of the Knidians at Delphi, states that Odysseus has descended (καταβεβηκώς) into Hades (10.28.1).

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their tasks required something present down there: Herakles to fetch Kerberos, Theseus and Peirithous to abduct Persephone and Orpheus to reclaim his dead wife. The patterns of movement in the *Nekyia* are not entirely clear, but all through the episode Odysseus and his men seem to remain on the same level as the world of the living, though very far away from civilization.[3] While some of the dead come up from below, others are described as walking back into the House of Hades once the exchange is over. The contact with the Underworld is achieved with the help of the pit, but the dead do not seem to ascend through the hole, which is for holding the blood, but from somewhere else nearby, just as Odysseus' sudden bird's eye view of Hades happens as if the ground becomes transparent. When Odysseus finishes the interaction, he walks back to his ship, which presumably is moored along the edge of Okeanos, on the same level as the pit dug in the riverbank. On the whole, the *Nekyia* rather describes an *anabasis*, where the beings of the Underworld ascend, than a *katabasis*, where the living go down into Hades.[4]

Due to the different elements making up the *Nekyia*, including its imprecise spatiality, Book 11 has often been conceived of as disorganized and inconsistent.[5] Scholars have long held that the episode came into being over a substantial period of time, combining materials of different date, origin and character.[6] Later interpolations and the oral origin of the later text have also been seen as contributing factors. On the other hand, studies of the narrative structure of Book 11 have underlined its clear internal unity, taken as an indication of the *Nekyia* being the work of a poet with an obvious intent who successfully combines various motifs to fit the overall concept of the poem.[7] Any certainty in this question is impossible, but the fact remains that Odysseus' visit to the Underworld, even if it is not a round trip in the strict sense, remains iconic within renderings of *katabaseis* and undoubtedly describes the living Odysseus interacting with the dead from Hades.

3 See Steiner 1971, 269. For Odysseus' travel to the west and the end of the world as corresponding to a vertical *katabasis*, see Burgess 1999, who characterizes the sea journey as a horizontal *katabasis*.

4 See Nesselrath's discussion in this volume of the *anabasis* of Charon in Lucian's dialogue of the same name.

5 The discussion, especially of Homer, *Odyssey* 11.565–627, began already in antiquity, see Petzl 1969, 6–43.

6 For overviews of the discussion, see Page 1955, 21–51; Steiner 1971, 265–66; Crane 1988, 87–125; Heubeck and Hoekstra 1989, 75–77; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 73–89.

7 See Heubeck and Hoekstra 1989, 76–77; for a consistent narrative structure, see also de Jong 2001, 272.

This paper will focus on one particular aspect of this interaction, namely the techniques for reaching and communicating with the Underworld. Essential in this process are the actual means used, namely the pit, the *bothros*, dug in the riverbed, and the sacrifices performed, a complex we may call a "pit ritual."[8] My aim is to contextualize the pit ritual within Greek religion, looking at its reception and impact in the literary and iconographical sources, but also its relation to the Eastern Mediterranean traditions as to interactions with the Underworld.

A Ritual at a Pit – Texts and Images

Let us begin with Homer's account of what happens. The event starts in Book 10 when Kirke instructs Odysseus of how to proceed, followed in Book 11 by the actual consultation, which is described in detail.[9]

Odysseus goes to the house of Hades by boarding his boat and letting the wind take him across Okeanos to a shore where the river Acheron meets the rivers Pyriphlegethon, Kokytos and Styx.[10] On this spot, at a rock, he digs a pit, a *bothros*, a cubit's length, with his sword and around it pours a libation, *choē*, to all the dead, first with milk and honey, then with sweet wine, thirdly with water, and finally he sprinkles barley meal on it. He promises the dead that, once back on Ithaka, he will sacrifice a barren heifer to them, and to Teiresias alone a black ram, the finest of the flocks. These vows are followed by the sacrifice at the pit of a ram and a black ewe, turning their heads towards Erebos, while Odysseus looks in the other direction, towards the river. This action causes the dead to appear. Odysseus' comrades flay and burn the dead sheep and pray to Hades and Persephone, while Odysseus himself sits down with his sword drawn, not allowing the dead to approach the blood in the pit before he has had the opportunity to inquire Teiresias.

The main purpose of Odysseus' journey was to get instructions for how to get back to Ithaka, information which Kirke makes clear can only be provided by the ghost of the seer Teiresias, who, even as a dead person, is still in command of his reason, in contrast with the other departed who flit about as shadows.[11] To summon the dead to receive information about the future is a kind of necromancy, an oracular or divinatory consultation of the dead, which usually

8 For this denomination, see Bachvarova 2016, 86–101.

9 Homer, *Odyssey* 10.504–40 and 11.13–50.

10 On the rivers as part of the Underworld landscape, see Mackie 1999.

11 Homer, *Odyssey* 11.490–94.

involves the departed coming to the living rather than the other way around.[12] It has also been suggested that the *Nekyia* was originally a description of a visit to an oracle of the dead at a real *nekromanteion*, which in the poem has been set at the entrance to Hades.[13]

To what extent the accounts of necromancy and *nekromanteia* found in the Greek narrative sources reflect actual living practices is a disputed issue. Some scholars claim that necromancy was a literary construct, and Daniel Ogden, in his study of necromancy in Greek and Roman times, states that there is no source that describes a definite historical performance of necromancy, nor any account of a consultation of a *nekromanteion*, which can be historically demonstrated.[14] Others argue that the handling of the restless dead and calling them into the world of the living were actions undertaken in real life but foremost in the private sphere, although far from all such interactions with the dead are to be characterized as necromancy.[15] The dead could be accessed for various purposes, but actual divination seems to have been unusual, and there is little evidence that the dead were perceived in general to be in command of the knowledge that would make oracular consultation feasible.

Considering the uncertainty of necromancy as a real practice, the question is, was the pit ritual of the *Nekyia* an established procedure for accessing the Underworld and part of living Greek religion? To answer this query we have to look closer at the performance of the pit ritual in our Greek sources. Of central importance for Odysseus' contact with Hades is the *bothros*. This term means a pit dug in the ground, for example for planting a tree or a vine or to bury a corpse, but also to be used for ritual purposes.[16] It is interesting to note, that most texts that describe ritual uses of *bothroi* show a connection to the *Nekyia*. Some are direct quotes or references to the episode, or paraphrases, sometimes with an ironic twist, such as Lucian's account in *Menippos,*

12 On necromancy, see Ogden 2001; Bremmer 2015; Voutiras 2015, 405.

13 Steiner 1971, 269; Heubeck and Hoekstra 1989, 75–76.

14 Ogden 2001, XXII–XXIII and 22; see also the critical reviews by Johnston 2002 and Graf 2006. As for oracles of the dead, *nekromanteia* and their historicity, see the contribution by Friese in this volume. In a sense, this view of necromancy recalls the practice of cannibalism, which it has been suggested is an invention, as there are no direct eyewitness accounts, only stories of what used to take place earlier (in grandfather's days) or at another location (the village in the next valley); see Arens, 1979.

15 See the useful discussion in Bremmer 2015. For the handling of the dead and the changes in attitudes from Homer down to the Classical period, see Johnston 1999, 3–123.

16 For the use and meaning of the term *bothros*, see Ekroth 2002, 60–74. For an overview of the use of pits for the evocation of the dead in Greek and Roman literary sources, see also Ogden 2001, 163–79.

or The Descent Into Hades.[17] In Apollonios Rhodios' *Argonautika*, an elaborate pit ritual is described and the narrative structure even echoes the *Odyssey*, as the same story is told twice, first in the instructions given by Medea and then when the actual event takes place.[18] The purpose of the ritual is to propitiate Hekate and seek her help in procuring the Golden Fleece. Jason bathes in a stream and then digs a *bothros*, which is one cubit deep. Into this pit, he cuts the throat of a ewe, piles up firewood over the hollow, places the animal on top and burns it whole. He evokes Hekate and libates milk and honey, and finally the goddess appears. Also the *Orphic Argonautika*, probably as late as the fourth century CE, has a similar account.[19] The Argonauts are told by the seer Mopsos to invoke Hekate to get instructions how to get into the precinct where the dragon guards the Golden Fleece. A *bothros* is dug by Orpheus, filled with various kinds of wood and figurines made of meal are placed on top of it. Three black puppies are killed, their blood mixed with herbs and then poured into their stomachs, finally to be placed on top of the wood. The rest of the intestines are scattered around the pit. Orpheus sounds a bronze gong and prays, and Hekate, Pandora and the Poinai appear, all carrying torches, while the wood in the *bothros* kindles by itself.

The two *Argonautika* accounts clearly have the *Nekyia* as their point of reference, but also in other contexts where *bothroi* are used, many of the elements in the Homeric episode are present.[20] We may note that the pits are dug at remote locations and used for a one-time ritual, the importance of the blood, the destruction of the offerings by fire, the performance of the rituals at night and that the recipients are beings of the Underworld, such as the ordinary dead, Hekate, Kore or unnamed chthonian gods. The purposes are similar as well, to make those residing in the world below ascend so that they can be consulted or provide help. The ritual at the pit could serve also as a kind of crisis management to propitiate the gods of the Underworld, to avoid danger and

17 Lykophron, *Alexandra* 684; Pausanias 10.29.8; Lucian, *Astrology*, 24; Philostratos, *Heroicus* 43.14, see also Ekroth 2002, 63–65, For Lucian, *Menippos, or The Descent Into Hades* 9, see the contribution by Nesselrath in this volume.

18 Apollonios Rhodios, *Argonautika* 3.1026–41 and 3.1194–222. For the relation to the *Nekyia*, see also Kyriakidou 1995.

19 *Orphic Argonautika* 950–87. For the date and the relationship with Apollonios Rhodios, see West 1983, 37.

20 Ekroth 2002, 63–74. Roman sources mention cases of more "institutionalized" *bothroi* located in sanctuary settings, see Pausanias 2.12.1, 2.22.3, 5.13.2, 9.39.6; Philostratos, *Heroicus* 53.11; Heliodoros, *Aithiopika* 1.17.5; see also Ekroth 2002, 70.

diseases or even tame the winds, recalling the fact that Teiresias explained to Odysseus how to placate the anger of Poseidon.[21]

From this overview of the ritual uses of *bothroi*, we may conclude that the action of digging a hole in the ground and performing various rituals in order to contact the Underworld seems to have constituted a particular motif in Greek literature.[22] Even if the view of Hades and the departed as outlined in the *Odyssey* may reflect contemporary beliefs concerning the afterlife, the communication with the dead in the *Nekyia*, as well as the later reception of the pit ritual in the textual sources, come across as literary constructs, rather than as evidence for regularly practiced rituals.[23]

The impression that the pit ritual was largely a literary phenomenon is supported by the scarcity of epigraphical evidence for the ritual use of *bothroi*. In all, there seem to be only two instances. The earliest is a third century BCE inscription from Delos, which records the buying of a piglet, presumably to purify a sanctuary.[24] The following line mentions pits, *bothroi*, but the context is not clear due to the stone being damaged. It is not possible to ascertain what they were used for or if there was a connection with the piglet. The second instance is late, a second century CE Roman oracle against pestilence from Kallipolis in Thrace, given by the sanctuary of Apollo at Klaros.[25] Here the consultants are instructed to sacrifice to the gods below earth, a black goat to Hades and a black sheep to Persephone. The blood is to flow into the *bothroi* together with libations of various kinds of remedies. Then the goat and the sheep are to be burnt with fragrant oils and frankincense. Finally, a libation of wine and milk extinguishes the fire. This elaborate ritual clearly emulates the Homeric account; one almost gets the impression that the *Nekyia* (or the *Argonautika*) was used as a template.[26] On the other hand, as we are here dealing with an

21 Ailios Aristides, *Sacred tales* II 26–27; Philostratos, *Life of Apollonios* 8.7.9; Pausanias 2.12.1 (the winds); cf. Ekroth 2002, 67.

22 Ekroth 2002, 60–75.

23 For the Homeric poems as reflecting contemporary views of the world of the dead, see Voutiras 2015.

24 *IG* XI:2 235, l. 3.

25 Krauss 1980, no. 11, l. 25; Merkelbach and Stauber 1996, 20, 9.

26 Such conscious archaizing as to both rituals and language is not uncommon in Greek religious inscriptions, particularly in the Roman period, see Ekroth 2014. Note that most of the texts where pit rituals are found date to the 1st to the 3rd c. CE, and that Philostratos (*Life of Apollonios*, 8.7.9) even mentions pestilence being averted by digging *bothroi* (although mocking the ritual).

explicit oracle, the pit ritual may in this case be taken as a practiced ritual, though one inspired by the *Odyssey*.[27]

If we broaden the perspective outside texts and inscriptions to include also representations of pit rituals for contacting the Underworld, the evidence is slight.[28] Admittedly, depicting a pit is a challenge in a two-dimensional image, which may explain why the motif was not a very popular one.[29] The earliest known representation of the *Nekyia* was Polygnotos' famous wall-painting in the *leschē* (club room) of the Knidians at Delphi, dated to the middle of the fifth century BCE.[30] This mural is not preserved, but we have an adequate understanding of its contents due to Pausanias' detailed account.[31] Although Polygnotos largely seems to have followed the Homeric text, Pausanias' description makes clear that the painter created his own version of the *Nekyia* by adding characters not mentioned in the *Odyssey*, for example Charon.[32]

In his comprehensive analysis of Pausanias' text, Mark Stansbury-O'Donnell suggests that Odysseus was depicted on the north wall and that this part of the painting was conceived of in various levels.[33] On the upper level, Odysseus was placed facing Elpenor, Teiresias and Antikleia, as well as his companions bringing the sheep, but also Charon in his boat crossing the river. This higher location suggests a setting outside the Underworld proper for these figures, but still far away from the world of ordinary humans. Below this level the dead heroes and heroines in Hades itself were represented.[34] On the west and south walls of the *leschē*, other Greek and Trojan heroes were shown, as well as sinners

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27 In Late Antiquity, the magical papyri also suggest the performance of actual necromantic rituals, see Bremmer 2015, 134–41.

28 For an overview of the Nekyia motif in ancient art, see Touchefeu-Meyer 1968, 133–44; Felten 1997.

29 A possible pit is rendered on a late 5th-c. BCE relief from Catania, Sicily, showing Demeter and Kore, perhaps a *megaron* for the deposition of piglets, see Ekroth 2010, 151 and fig. 47.

30 Touchefeu-Meyer 1968, 133–34, no. 225; Touchefeu-Meyer 1992, 961; Zimmermann 1997, 1189, no. 1; Cousin 1997. For the remains of the Lesche, see Pouilloux 1960, 120–39. According to Roman sources, there was also a 4th-century BCE *Nekyia* painting by Nikias in Athens, see Zimmermann 1997, 1189, no. 2.

31 Pausanias 10.25.1–31.12.

32 In one instance (10.31.2) Pausanias even says that Polygnotos must have followed an account by Archilochos.

33 Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990, 223; see also Cousin 1997; Felten 1997. For previous reconstructions, see Robert 1892, who puts little faith in the accuracy of Pausanias' description.

34 The exception is Tityos, who seems to be on the same 'level' as Odysseus, see Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990, 220, fig. 3.

undergoing punishment. The characters on the upper level do not seem to be aware of the figures further down and this separation supports the ancient understanding of the *Nekyia* as not being a real *katabasis* where Odysseus is present in Hades.[35] The pit ritual was apparently not explicitly rendered, as Odysseus was shown squatting at the pit holding his sword while his companions were bringing the living sheep.[36]

In spite of its fame, Polygnotos' *Nekyia* painting did not inspire many other works of art.[37] It is hardly echoed on Attic vase-paintings at all, which was the case with other famous monumental paintings, reliefs and sculptures, but the location at Delphi could have made it less interesting to Athenian potters and painters.[38] The pit ritual, however, is explicitly depicted on two vase paintings.[39] The first is found on an Athenian red-figure pelike now in Boston dated to ca 440 BCE (*Figure 3.1*).[40] The scene shows Odysseus seated on a rock grasping his sword. No companions are with him; instead, Hermes stands to the right, ready to interfere. The killed sheep lie in front of Odysseus and a trickle of blood can be seen running from their throats into the pit, the border of which is indicated by a thin line.[41] Odysseus' comrade Elpenor, who came to an accidental death at Kirke's house and who had not yet entered Hades as he still had to be buried, appears to the left, revealing himself to Odysseus in the reeds of the river, originally added in white.[42]

The second vase painting is a Lucanian kalyx krater in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris, dated to c. 400–375 BCE (*Figure 3.2*).[43] Odysseus is sitting

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35 Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990, 223. Still, Pausanias actually says that the painting shows Odysseus who has descended (καταβεβηκώς) into Hades to enquire of Teiresias (10.28.1)

36 Pausanias 10.29.8 (Odysseus at the pit); 10.29.1 (Perimedes and Erylochos bringing the black rams).

37 Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990, 228 and 232–34; Touchefeu-Meyer 1968, 133–44. Touchefeu-Meyer 1992, 961. See also McNiven 1989 who argues that the Niobid krater shows Odysseus in Hades surrounded by heroes. For motifs related to Odysseus in ancient art in general, see Touchefeu-Meyer 1968.

38 Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990, 232–34.

39 There is also a Roman relief, 1st or 2nd c. CE, showing Odysseus at the pit holding his sword facing Teiresias seated on a rock, see Touchefeu-Meyer 1968, 137–38, n. 231; Felten 1997, 874, n.12.

40 Boston, Museum of Fine Art 1934.79, Lycaon Painter; Touchefeu-Meyer 1968, 135–36, no. 227.

41 McNiven 1989, 197: the outlines of the rock and the pit where added in white paint which is now gone.

42 McNiven 1989, 197.

43 Paris, Cabinet des Médailles 422, Dolon Painter; Touchefeu-Meyer 1968, 136, no. 228.



FIGURE 3.1 *Odysseus meets the shade of Elpenor. Attic red-figure pelike in Boston, Museum of Fine Art, inv. no. 1934.79, by the Lycaon Painter, c. 440* BCE.
PHOTOGRAPH: © 2017 MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON.

on a rock holding his sword, flanked by two companions. Below his feet are the slaughtered sheep, one of them perhaps represented as decapitated.[44] The blood figures prominently in this representation, and has even flowed outside the pictorial field, under Odysseus' foot onto the border that constitutes the lower limit of the scene. The head of Teiresias, with white hair and beard, is seen rising from the ground to the left. There is no direct indication of the pit itself unless we are to assume that Teiresias is emerging from the *bothros*.

Both representations relate more to the Homeric account than to Polygnotos' painting as described by Pausanias, considering the treatment of the sheep and the importance of their blood. Stansbury-O'Donnell points out that the

44 Decapitation: Ekroth 2002, 174 and 271–75. Ogden 2001, 87–90 proposes that only the fleeces of the sheep are shown, as such animal skins were used in purification and the pit ritual had purificatory overtones. For the *Nekyia* as a purification ritual, see also Bachvarova 2016, 101; Steiner 1971, 277–78.

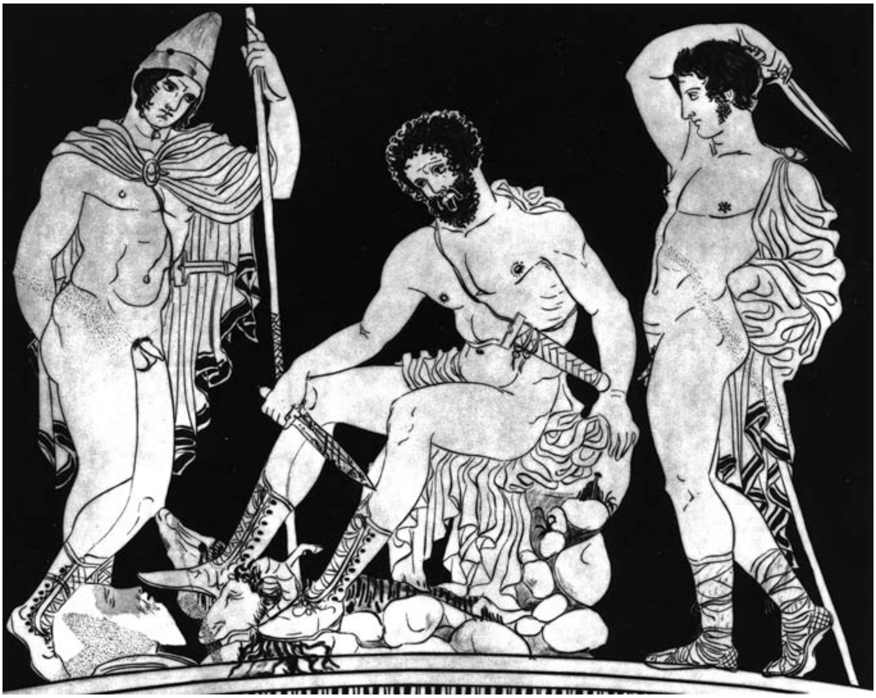


FIGURE 3.2 *Odysseus consults the shade of Teiresias by means of the blood from two slaughtered sheep. Lucanian red-figure kalyx krater in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris, by Dolon Painter, c. 400–375 BCE.*
SOURCE: FROM A. FURTWÄNGLER AND K. REICHHOLD, *GRIECHISCHE VASENMALEREI*, VOL. 1, MUNICH 1900, PL. 60.1.

Boston vase does not copy Polygnotos' painting, since, according to Pausanias, Elpenor was said to wear a mat instead of clothes, while on the vase he is naked.[45] Moreover, the wall painting showed the sheep being brought alive by Odyssseus' companions and not as slaughtered at the pit. Still, we should keep in mind that ancient art, and especially vase-painting, was not created to be illustrations of ancient texts and what is represented can be an independent tradition not found in the written sources. The inclusion of Hermes on the Boston vase could reflect such a variation and Hermes' role as psychopomp does not make his presence surprising in any sense.[46] The Lucanian krater

45 Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990, 222.
46 In Homer, *Odyssey* 24.1–14, Hermes leads the ghosts of the dead suitors down into Hades. For Hermes as psychopomp being a later development and Book 24 a later addition reflecting Archaic mentalities, see Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 94–107.

follows the *Odyssey* more closely; on the other hand, it has recently been proposed that the vase was a bespoke piece of a Pythagorean initiate.[47]

On the whole, the pit ritual seems to be a literary and iconographical motif with a limited spread. The impact of the *Nekyia* on subsequent renderings is indisputable, although particular features could be elaborated and rearranged. Nothing in the written and iconographical record suggests the performance of pit rituals in real life, apart from the second century CE Roman inscription recording an oracle, which seems like a conscious attempt to create a practiced ritual with the Homeric poem as a model. In all, Homer can be seen as the origin and source of inspiration for pit rituals within the Greek tradition, rather than as an account of a living practice.

An Eastern Connection

If the *Nekyia* does not reflect a real practiced ritual, where did these highly specific actions come from? The pit ritual could of course have been made up by the poet, seeking inspiration from other types of rituals to create something entirely new.[48] A Mycenaean origin has been proposed as well, based on the archaeological evidence for pit-like installations in Late Helladic funerary contexts.[49] However, these pits could have served a multitude of functions and do not fit the characteristics of the pit ritual in the Homeric poem, nor the ones found in the later Greek tradition. The foremost example, the hollow "altar" above Grave Circle A at Mycenae, is a raised, permanent structure suggested to have been used for official cult and not a temporary installation dug at a remote location.[50] In the Mycenaean cult of the dead, libations were an important element, just as at the Homeric pit rituals, but the limited zooarchaeological

47 Bottini 2012, arguing that the scene would have referred to Pythagoras' ability to rise from the dead and communicate with the living, the deeper meaning of which would have been grasped only by those belonging to the Pythagorean circle.

48 Heubeck and Hoekstra 1989, 71, ll. 516–40, suggest that the ritual has its closest analogies in practices at festivals for the dead like the Anthesteria in Athens where the spirits of the dead were summoned and appeased with sacrifices and mingled with the living.

49 For evidence for the use of pits in the Mycenaean cult of the dead, see Gallou 2005, 18–32, 88 and 98–99. Bachvarova 2016, 78–84 and 105–10 sees pit rituals as a widespread practice in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Late Bronze Age. For the prevailing skepticism of a Mycenaean cult of the dead, see Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 89–94; Gallou 2005, 13–19.

50 For the installation on top of Grave Circle A at Mycenae, see Schliemann 1878, 246 and Pl. F, called *Leichenaltar*; Strøm 1983, 141–46; Gallou 2005, 19–32 and 98.

evidence from the Late Helladic contexts does not indicate a ritual treatment of the animals in the manner outlined in the *Nekyia*, that is, a holocaust. In many cases, the bones seem to be unburnt and may rather represent dogs and horses buried to accompany their dead owners.[51]

The use of pits to provide the dead and the Underworld with offerings is not surprising and may certainly have been part of the Mycenaean cult of the dead, just as it was in funerary cults in later periods.[52] Still, the extant archaeological evidence is too generic to argue that Mycenaean rituals lay behind the highly elaborate ritual described in the *Nekyia*. Furthermore, the interpretation of the Late Helladic material remains is often based on the assumption that the Homeric poems reflect real practiced cult, as well as guided by a desire to have the archaeological record comply with Homer, thereby both disregarding any differences and risking a circular argument.[53]

New ways of understanding the *Nekyia* have opened up through the recognition of the importance of Eastern influences on Greek culture from the Late Bronze Age down to the Orientalizing period, pioneered by Martin West and Walter Burkert.[54] Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have been shown to have several parallels with the Gilgamesh epic.[55] Of particular interest for the pit rituals is Tablet XII of the epic, which contains the Sumerian poem of Bilgamesh and the Netherworld, translated into Akkadian and added to the Standard Babylonian version at the very end of the eighth century BCE.[56] The "playthings" of Gilgamesh have fallen into the Netherworld and his servant Enkidu offers to get them.[57] Gilgamesh warns Enkidu of the dangers of entering the realm of the dead and when, as Gilgamesh feared, Enkidu cannot come back to the living, he implores the gods to help him. Eventually the god Enki orders

51 On libations and drinking ceremonies at Mycenaean tombs, see Gallou 2005, 87–97, for remains of animals, Gallou 2005, 99–104.

52 For pits in tomb rituals, see Ogden 2001, 7–12. In the Selinous *lex sacra*, the impure Tritopatores receive a libation of wine through the roof of their sanctuary; see Jameson, Jordan and Kotansky 1993, 30–31, A 11.

53 Rohde's claim (1925, 55–59 and 241–42) that the rituals described in the *Nekyia* reflect an ancient cult of the dead has been very influential; cf. Gallou 2005, 22–23.

54 Burkert 1992; West 1997. On the methodological problems in defining Eastern influences in Homer (though far from denying them), see Rollinger 2015.

55 West 1997, 398–99; Rollinger 2015. In particular, the friendship between Achilles and Patroklos has been compared with that between Gilgamesh and Enkidu.

56 George 1999, 100, 140 and 174–94; West 1997, 415–16; see also the contribution by Graf in this volume.

57 George 1999, 183, ll. 163–80 (Sumerian version). The understanding of the nature of the objects falling into the Underworld is unclear.

Shamash to make an opening in the Netherworld so that the shade of Enkidu can come up again.[58]

The use of the pit to bring up Enkidu from the Underworld certainly recalls the pit used by Odysseus, even though no animal blood or holocausts are mentioned, but other shared elements of the story have also been noted.[59] When the shade of Enkidu and Gilgamesh meet again, they embrace, as Odysseus tries in vain to do with his mother, and Enkidu then proceeds to tell Gilgamesh what it is like in the realm of the dead as well as the fate of the departed, similarly to Odysseus hearing the stories of the heroes and heroines in Hades. More importantly, both Gilgamesh and Odysseus stay at the side of the pit and it is the dead who come to them. Neither of them descends into the Underworld and it is the pit that makes the communication possible.

The story of Gilgamesh can be seen as one possible source of inspiration or origin for the *Nekyia*, but closer parallels are found in Hittite ritual texts, especially those of Hurrian origin, dating to c. 1400 to 1200 BCE, which outline the performance of actual pit rituals.[60] In Hittite religion, the pits had multiple uses: to contact the deities of the Underworld and to provide them with offerings, to ensure fertility and to get rid of impurities – in many cases making use of piglets. The pit rituals of the first category are of particular interest for the *Nekyia* pit ritual, but it should be underlined that each Hittite text contains a number of specific details that make each ritual unique.

Odysseus digs a pit in the riverbank with his sword; libates honey, wine and water and sprinkles barley meal for the dead; then sacrifices a ram and a black ewe such that their blood runs into the pit, which causes the dead to approach. The victims are flayed and burnt and prayers made to Hades and Persephone. In the Hittite-Hurrian rituals, a number of elements recall the *Nekyia*. The pits can be located on riverbanks and dug with daggers.[61] The libations poured out consist of oil, wine and beer, while cakes, meal, bread and porridge are

58 George 1999, 187, ll. 239–43 (Sumerian version); 194, ll. 80–89 (Tablet XII, Akkadian version).

59 West 1997, 415–16. See, however, Topper 1989, 62–69, for distinctions between this account and later evocations of the dead.

60 Hoffner 1967, 389–92; Steiner 1971, 270–75; Topper 1989, 110–17; West 1997, 426–27; Collins 2002; Collins 2006; Bachvarova 2016, 78–110.

61 The examples follow the presentation of the material in Collins 2002. River bank, Collins 2002, nos. 2 and 7. Dagger, Collins 2002, nos. 2, 3 and 7. At the Hittite sanctuary of Yazilikaya, just outside Hattusa, an Underworld god is represented with the lower part of his body shaped like a dagger or sword, plunged into the ground, see Bryce 2002, 197.

scattered around or into the pits.[62] Animals, such as lambs or sheep, piglets or birds are slaughtered to let their blood into the pits.[63] On some occasions, the animals or parts of them (the fat) are burnt.[64] Among the deities contacted is the Sun Goddess of the Underworld, who is called upon to open the gates and let the deities of the Underworld come up.[65] If the post-Homeric accounts of pit rituals are taken into consideration as well, the manufacturing of figurines from clay of the river bank mixed with oil and honey may recall the figurines of meal mentioned in the *Orphic Argonautika*,[66] while the scattering of the intestines of the puppies sacrificed in the same account evokes the cut off intestines and female pig genitalia in the Hittite evidence.[67]

There are also differences that should be noted, such as that in the Hittite-Hurrian rituals the blood can be used for smearing the sides of the pit or the images of the gods.[68] The animals are not always burnt, but can be deposited in the pit or in some instances even be cooked and eaten.[69] To cover or backfill the pits was also a part of some Hittite-Hurrian settings, presumably to keep the impurities at bay down below.[70] An important distinction is that the beings called up are deities of the Underworld and not the ordinary dead, as in Hittite religion pit rituals do not seem to have served necromantic purposes.[71] Finally, the aims of Hittite pit rituals are wider, for example to ensure fertility or achieve purification, and piglets are here an important element. On the

62 Libations: Collins 2002, nos. 1, 2, 5, 10 and 12. Bread, cakes, meal and porridge: Collins 2002, nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 12.

63 Lambs: Collins 2002, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6. Piglets or pigs: Collins 2002, nos. 7, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 15. Birds: Collins 2002, nos. 1 and 5. Slaughtered into pit: Collins 2002, nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 11 and 13.

64 Burning: Collins 2002, no. 3 (fat) and no. 5 (two birds).

65 Collins 2002, 224–26. One text (Collins 2002, no. 2) even calls for the divine seer Aduntarri and the female dream interpreter Zulki to come up to partake of the offerings, see Steiner 1971, 274; West 1997, 426–27.

66 Collins 2002, no. 2.

67 Collins 2002, no. 6 (cut off intestines), no. 8 (cut off genitalia of a sow), cf. no. 1 (cut up lamb).

68 Smearing of blood: Collins 2002, no. 1 (pits) and no. 3 (images of the gods).

69 Animals deposited into the pit: Collins 2002, nos. 1 and 6. Eaten: Collins 2002, nos. 4 and 13.

70 Collins 2002, nos. 6, 10 and 12. A piglet fetus was found buried under a nailed-down terracotta lid in a pit in the Hittite sanctuary at Yazilikaya, see Hauptmann 1975, 62–75. For the archaeological evidence for the use of pits in Hittite religion, see also Popkin 2013.

71 For the lack of evidence for necromantic rituals among the Hittites, see Topper 1989, 110–17; Collins 2007, 169–71.

other hand, piglets could be deposited into pits (*megara*) for fertility purposes also in Greek religion, as was done in the cult of Demeter at the Thesmophoria festival.[72] The use of piglets for purifications was well established among the Greeks, but such rituals did not involve pits and the animals were instead discarded as rubbish or burnt.[73]

The similarities between the Hittite-Hurrian pit rituals and the *Nekyia* are too many for this to be coincidental. If the Homeric pit ritual was a literary motif rather than a part of practiced Greek religion, it seems possible that the poet incorporated an account of such a ritual deriving from an Eastern, Anatolian tradition. The relation between the Greeks and the Hittites in the Late Bronze Age is a complex issue as to concrete physical and political interaction, but the pit ritual of the *Nekyia* is not alone among possible Hittite influences on Greek culture. The practice of cremation of the dead may have been taken over from Anatolia in the thirteenth to the twelfth centuries BCE, and the similarities between the Hittite royal funeral ritual and Homer's description of the funeral of Patroklos have also been highlighted by scholars.[74] Especially the *Iliad* has been argued to contain elements of Hittite-Hurrian as well as Mesopotamian origins.[75]

If we assume that the *Nekyia* is not a reflection of indigenous Greek practices, but a literary topos borrowed from the east, presumably from Anatolia but with a possible pedigree back to Mesopotamia, the question of where, when and how such transmission could have taken place should be touched upon as well, although a more comprehensive discussion of this issue lies outside the scope of this paper. The Eastern influences on Greek culture in the Late Bronze Age, but primarily in the Early Iron Age and the subsequent Archaic or Orientalizing periods have been explored in increasing detail during the last decades. Martin West identified three periods of intense contacts with the East: the Mycenaean (c. 1450–1200 BCE), the Greek colonization of Cyprus (c. 1200–1050 BCE) and the period of the Assyrian empire expanding towards

72 Clinton 2005, 177–78; Collins 2002, 235–38 and 2006, 168–70.

73 For the purificatory uses of piglets, see Clinton 2005, 168–76; Parker 1983, 283 with n. 11 and 371–73. The inscription from Delos mentioned earlier (*IG* XI:2 235, l. 3), where a piglet is to be used for the purification of a sanctuary, perhaps later to be deposited into a *bothros*, may recall practices similar to the Hittite ones.

74 Puhvel 1991, 9–12 and 19–29; Rutherford 2007. For other possible Hittite influences, see Bremmer 2001 and Collins 2007 (scapegoat rituals); Morris 2001 (Potnia).

75 See Bachvarova 2008 on how the story of the destruction of a city evolves as it passes from the Near Eastern to the Anatolian and finally Greek setting, and Bachvarova 2016, 418–57 for different layers of Anatolian influence in the *Iliad*.

the Mediterranean Sea, which lead to Greek traders, mercenaries and colonists being exposed to Eastern ideas.[76] He also underlined the importance of Greeks and peoples of the East living side by side for long periods and communicating fluently in a shared language for such transmissions to take place, that is, a scenario that goes far beyond casual commercial contacts. At the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Early Iron Age, transmission through Hurrian speakers or northwest Syrian intermediaries, presumably on Cyprus, is one possibility, while contacts with the Assyrian court at the end of the 8th century through a bilingual immigrant poet should not be excluded.[77] Walter Burkert suggested that in the Orientalizing period Eastern seers and magicians being migrant craftsmen were particularly important in this process, bringing their art and knowledge of different rituals.[78]

A more concrete notion of how rituals could have been transmitted has been proposed by Bachvarova, focusing on wandering Anatolian poets performing in a ritual context outside that of home or at festivals at which people from different geographic and ethnic regions participated.[79] The importation of a foreign god, accompanied by his or her own ritual personnel, could also have contributed to a transmission.[80] Cilicia is pointed out as a central region where Hittite-Hurrian traditions may have survived and been later taken over by the Greeks. The figure of Mopsos is here particularly interesting due to his Late Bronze Age roots and survival into Greek myth.[81] In fact, it is Mopsos who describes the pit ritual that the Argonauts are to perform in the *Orphic Argonautika* (950–987), and he, or one of his mythical personae, is also linked to the oracle of Apollo at Klaros, the institution which in the 2nd century CE prescribed a remedy against pestilence using an explicit pit ritual.

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76 West 1997, 586–630.

77 Tablet XII was not added to the Gilgamesh epos until after the death of Sargon II in 705 BCE, so any direct influences on Homer must be after that date, see Rollinger 2015, 15 and 18; West 1997, 587 and 627–78, who speaks of a possible 'hot line' from the Assyrian court.

78 Burkert 1992, 41–87, cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 17.383–86: *demiourgoi*, such as a seer, healer, builder of wood or even a godly singer, are invited to peoples' houses as *xenoi*.

79 Bachvarova 2009.

80 The Hittite king Mursili II (late 14th century BCE) imported gods from Ahhiyawa (Achaia) and Lazpa (Lesbos) to heal him when sick, an indication of that ritual transferral between Greeks and Hittites took place; see Bachvarova 2009, 36.

81 Bachvarova 2016, 318–19, 382–86 and 392–93, the name Mopsos being attested in both Linear B and Hittite texts.

Concluding Remarks

The pit ritual of the *Nekyia* does not seem to reflect real practiced cultic behavior of ancient Greece and its occurrence in post-Homeric texts and iconography can be seen as a topos falling back on the *Odyssey*. This situation may be explained by the ritual, or rather an account of such a ritual, being taken over from the Eastern Mediterranean, more specifically the Hittite-Hurrian sphere, but not spreading beyond myth and literature into living Greek religion. The Greek audiences hearing of Odysseus 'round trip' must have been intrigued and perhaps found the account strange and alien, something done by the Others, far away from their own society. After all, this is a ritual explained and introduced to Odysseus by Kirke, not an element of Odysseus' own ritual practices. Still, a tradition of pit rituals may have survived into the historical periods in Anatolia, a situation which could account for the fact that some of the most explicit post-Homeric descriptions of such actions are connected to Asia Minor. Odysseus' *katabasis* to Hades, making use of a *bothros* for contacting the Underworld, originated in real ritual practices of the Hittite period, passed through Homer and the Homeric tradition, finally to be re-enacted once more in Ionia, as prescribed by the oracle of Apollo at Klaros.

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CHAPTER 4

Divine Bondage and *Katabaseis* in Hesiod's *Theogony*

Ivana Petrovic and Andrej Petrovic

Homer and Hesiod Bound in Hades

According to a story transmitted in Diogenes Laertios and ascribed to Hieronymos of Rhodes, when Pythagoras descended into Hades, he saw the souls of Homer and Hesiod there, suffering and punished on account of what they said about the gods: the soul of Hesiod was bound to a bronze column and squeaking, whereas the soul of Homer was hung from a tree and surrounded by snakes.[1] Commenting on this passage, Hugo Koning points out that the punishments of poets are represented in accordance to their own visions of the Underworld,[2] for it was Hesiod who claimed that there is a bronze fence, threshold, and gate in Tartaros,[3] and Homer's souls squeak when they are led to Hades;[4] furthermore, Hesiod represents Prometheus as bound to a column by Zeus.[5] According to Koning, Homer's fate is similar to that of the unfortunate mythical musician Marsyas, who defied Apollo and was hung from a tree.[6] Homer's particular punishment, however, also has a close equivalent in the *Iliad*, where Zeus threatens Hera and reminds her of the time he hung her up, bound her hands, and attached two anvils to her feet, so that she was suspended in the clouds, and no god could set her free.[7]

Pythagoras' Underworld vision reflects the way in which both Homer and Hesiod were fervently criticized in Antiquity on the grounds of their representations of the gods. In a continuous tradition we can follow from Xenophanes onwards, the all too human behaviour of the gods who "steal, commit adultery,

1 Diogenes Laertios 8.21 = T 100 Most.
2 Koning 2010, 84–86.
3 Hesiod, *Theogony* 726 (fence), 732–33 (gate), 749–50 (threshold).
4 Homer, *Iliad* 23.100–1 and *Odyssey* 24.5–7.
5 Hesiod, *Theogony* 521–22.
6 Koning 2010, 86. The earliest attestation of this story is in Herodotos 7.26.
7 Homer, *Iliad* 15.16–33. See on this Whitman 1970.

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and deceive each other"[8] was perceived as impious and shocking.[9] Apart from the bad behaviour of the epic gods, it was the epic vision of the Underworld that was also subject to criticism.[10] The two are, of course, related, in particular in Hesiod's *Theogony*, where the Underworld almost exclusively appears in the passages where the various punishments of the unruly gods are treated.[11]

Hesiod's Visions of the Underworld: Divine Bondage and Imprisonment

At the beginning of his narration of the origins of the world in the *Theogony*, Hesiod states that at first there was only Chaos, which is to be imagined as a featureless void,[12] and then the Earth, Tartaros, and Eros came to be.[13] Tartaros is initially described as "murky" and "in the depths of the broad-pathed earth."[14] The word "Tartaros" was in Antiquity related to the verb ταράσσω,[15] "to stir, trouble, agitate, disturb, rout, upset."[16] The role of Tartaros in the *Theogony*

8 Xenophanes fr. 21 B 11.3 Diels-Kranz. Xenophanes famously subjected the epic gods of Homer and Hesiod to intellectual (frs. 21 B 14, 15 and 16 Diels-Kranz) and moral criticism (frs. B 11 and 12 Diels-Kranz). Literature on this subject is vast; for an overview, Meijer 1981; Emlyn-Jones 1992; Koning 2010, 57–103; for a critique of common perceptions of Xenophanes' criticism, Ford 2002, 46–66; Most 2007, 274–76.

9 In two passages, Plato raises objections against epic stories featuring bondage, among other divine crimes (*Euthyphro* 6a; *Republic* 2. 377d–8). On Plato's reception of Hesiod, see Boys-Stones and Haubold 2010, and especially Ford 2010 and Most 2010. In Euripides' *Herakles*, the eponymous hero protests against the stories about divine bondage, but without specific reference to Hesiod or Homer (1341–46).

10 See Koning 2010, 79–80 with bibliography.

11 According to Pausanias 9.31.4–5, Hesiod was also attributed with a poem depicting the *katabasis* of Peirithous and Theseus to Hades. A papyrus fragment (fr. 280 Merkelbach-West), containing a conversation in the Underworld between Meleager and Theseus has been ascribed to this poem.

12 Bussanich 1983; Podbielski 1986, 254–56; Mondi 1989; Lincoln 2009.

13 Hesiod, *Theogony* 116–20.

14 Hesiod, *Theogony* 119: Τάρταρά τ᾽ ἠερόεντα μυχῷ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης. We quote the text and translation of Most (2006). Some scholars argue that Τάρταρα in v. 119 is to be understood as accusative, governed by ἔχουσι in the previous line. Beall 2009 provides an overview of those who support the accusative reading. We side with West 1966 comm. ad vv. 117–18 and Clay 2003, 15–16 and read Τάρταρα as neuter plural.

15 Scholia vetera ad 119: Τάρταρα δὲ εἶπεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ταράττεσθαι· ἠερόεντα δέ, σκοτεινά. See also West 1966, ad v. 119.

16 *LSJ* s.v.

corresponds to the ancient interpretations of the word, for this is the place where the divinities detain their disruptive and unruly adversaries. Since the gods cannot be killed, the only way to incapacitate them is to either bind or imprison them,[17] but, as we learn from the *Theogony*, the best and most efficient way of rendering them harmless was to use both types of punishment, binding and detention, simultaneously. In the *Theogony*, Hesiod frequently focuses on the way in which divinities punish and eliminate their opponents. Starting with Ouranos, each generation of the gods creates new and more ingenious ways of subjugating their adversaries, and it is Zeus, the main protagonist of the *Theogony*,[18] who truly excels at punishing. Instead of employing a one-size-fits-all type of punishment like his predecessors tended to resort to, Zeus devises ingenious and individual punishments for different types of offences, which is one of the reasons why he ultimately succeeds in establishing a stable reign.

Hesiod's *Theogony* is essentially a genealogy which progresses in a linear and dynamic mode,[19] from the featureless void that is Chaos, to a family of some 300 immortals united under the rule of Zeus. Of the four initial entities Hesiod mentions at the beginning, two (Chaos and Earth) start producing offspring, but the other two, Tartaros and Eros, do not. Commentators have long noted that even though Eros does not have direct offspring in the *Theogony*,

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17 We are currently writing a book about the phenomenon of bound divinities in ancient Greek myth and cult. For Near Eastern bondage rituals, see Meuli 1975, 1071–76 and Faraone 1992, 18–35. For the IE stratum, and generally on "dieu lieur," see Dumézil 1992², 155–61, with Éliade 1947–48, 5–36, Meuli 1975, 1036 (still the fullest overview of ethnicities descending from IE groups with attested binding rituals), and Graf 1985, 81–82. Greek evidence is dispersed in the following works: the overview in Lobeck 1829, 279 and Nilsson 1906, 230 has been systematically expanded by Meuli in his book-draft 'Gefesselte Götter' 1975, 1035–118. Merkelbach, who has posthumously edited Meuli 1975, in his own investigation 1971, 549–56 takes most of the previous sources into account and adds some modern parallels; Graf 1985, 81–98 is a *tour de force* on bound Dionysos on Chios, with abundant archaeological material, and systematic bibliography (cf. esp. 86, n. 78 and 79; for a full overview of older literature, 81, n. 50); Versnel 1987 analyses the festival of Kronia at Rhodes, its relationship to Saturnalia, and the relationship between this myth and ritual; Faraone 1991, 166–72 and esp. 1992, 74–78 and 136–40, expands the list of divine impeding/imprisonments by adding an additional four attestations (or three, since one is an obvious duplication); Steiner 2001, 160–68. For a clear overview of older interpretations, and an analysis of modern interpretations of rituals of reversal as embodied in rituals of binding, see respectively Graf 1985, 82, n. 58 and 59, and Versnel 1987, 135–39. See also our list at the end of this paper.

18 On Zeus' rise to power as the *telos* of the *Theogony*, see Clay 2003, 1–11 with bibliography.

19 Clay 2003, 14.

he does play a pivotal role in the process of generation, and is probably to be understood as the embodiment of generative powers.[20] As for Tartaros, Jenny Clay has argued persuasively that Tartaros undergoes a development in the *Theogony*, from its first appearance as ambiguous neuter plural (l. 119: Τάρταρά τ' ἠερόεντα), which suggests a spatial existence as a part of Earth,[21] to a fully-fledged and differentiated realm beneath the Earth (ll. 729–819), until finally, it becomes a generative entity with whom Gaia will produce the last and most formidable challenge to Zeus' reign, the monster Typhoeus (ll. 820–22).

The Earth is initially the most active generator and produces further elements, including Ouranos, who proves to be a difficult partner. Ouranos unites with Gaia and together they beget the twelve Titans, the Cyclopes, and the Hundred-Handers. However, as soon as each of his children is born, their father, Ouranos, imprisons them (ll. 154–59):

> ὅσσοι γὰρ Γαίης τε καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἐξεγένοντο
> δεινότατοι παίδων, σφετέρῳ δ' ἤχθοντο τοκῆ
> ἐξ ἀρχῆς· καὶ τῶν μὲν ὅπως τις πρῶτα γένοιτο,
> πάντας ἀποκρύπτασκε καὶ ἐς φάος οὐκ ἀνίεσκε
> Γαίης ἐν κευθμῶνι, κακῷ δ' ἐπετέρπετο ἔργῳ,
> Οὐρανός […]
>
> For all these, who came forth from Earth and Sky as the most terrible of their children, were hated by their own father from the beginning. And as soon as any of them was born, Sky put them all away out of sight in a hiding-place in Earth and did not let them come up into the light, and he rejoiced in his evil deed.

What exactly happened with the offspring of Gaia and Ouranos? Are they in Tartaros, or in the hole in the earth? At first, we are led to believe that they are hidden in the earth itself. Martin West submits that Γαίης ἐν κευθμῶνι implies that it is Gaia's womb that served as the prison of the Titans.[22] Jenny Clay similarly argues that Ouranos imprisoned his offspring "apparently by blocking the

20 See e.g. West 1966, ad v. 120.

21 Clay 2003, 15–16. As opposed to having a more abstract status as a first principle or a separate primeval element. This issue was debated already in antiquity; see Scholia ad vv. 115, 119, 120 and West 1966, comm. ad v. 119 (West is inclined to see Tartaros as a primeval element). For more recent bibliography, see Clay 2003, 15.

22 West 1966, 214 comm. ad v. 158.

birth canal through continuous sexual intercourse."[23] However, according to what Hesiod tells us later, it would appear that at least some of the offspring of Gaia and Ouranos were not concealed in Gaia's womb, but in the hole underneath the earth. Furthermore, later on in the narrative, it also becomes clear that Ouranos did not treat all his children equally. This transpires from the passages where Zeus features as the liberator of the Cyclopes and the Hundred-Handers. After freeing his siblings, Zeus frees the Cyclopes from bonds in the following way (ll. 501–6):

> λῦσε δὲ πατροκασιγνήτους ὀλοῶν ὑπὸ δεσμῶν,
> Οὐρανίδας, οὓς δῆσε πατὴρ ἀεσιφροσύνῃσιν·
> οἵ οἱ ἀπεμνήσαντο χάριν εὐεργεσιάων,
> δῶκαν δὲ βροντὴν ἠδ᾽ αἰθαλόεντα κεραυνὸν
> καὶ στεροπήν· τὸ πρὶν δὲ πελώρη Γαῖα κεκεύθει·
> τοῖς πίσυνος θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθανάτοισιν ἀνάσσει.

> And he freed from their deadly bonds his father's brothers, Sky's sons, whom their father had bound in his folly. And they repaid him in gratitude for his kind deed, giving him the thunder and the blazing thunderbolt and the lightning, which huge Earth had concealed before. Relying on these, he rules over mortals and immortals.

It is clear from this passage that Ouranos must have seen the Cyclopes after they were born, for he was able to tie them up. It is difficult to imagine the act of bondage taking place before the birth of the Cyclopes, while they were still in their mother's womb. Furthermore, it is suggestive that the Cyclopes spent their time detained underneath the earth, where they were able to acquaint themselves with the formidable force of the thunderbolt and lightning, which they present to Zeus as a reward for their freedom.

The passage which features Zeus as a liberator of the Hundred-Handers spells out what ll. 501–6 imply (ll. 617–26):

> Ὀβριάρεῳ δ᾽ ὡς πρῶτα πατὴρ ὠδύσσατο θυμῷ
> Κόττῳ τ᾽ ἠδὲ Γύγῃ, δῆσε κρατερῷ ἐνὶ δεσμῷ,
> ἠνορέην ὑπέροπλον ἀγώμενος ἠδὲ καὶ εἶδος
> καὶ μέγεθος· κατένασσε δ᾽ ὑπὸ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης.
> ἔνθ᾽ οἵ γ᾽ ἄλγε᾽ ἔχοντες ὑπὸ χθονὶ ναιετάοντες

23 Clay 2003, 17.

εἵατ᾽ ἐπ᾽ ἐσχατιῇ μεγάλης ἐν πείρασι γαίης
δηθὰ μάλ᾽ ἀχνύμενοι, κραδίῃ μέγα πένθος ἔχοντες.
ἀλλά σφεας Κρονίδης τε καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι
οὓς τέκεν ἠύκομος Ῥείη Κρόνου ἐν φιλότητι Γαίης
φραδμοσύνῃσιν ἀνήγαγον ἐς φάος αὖτις.

When first their father became angry in his spirit with Obriareus and Kottos and Gyges, he bound them with a mighty bond, for he was indignant at their defiant manhood and their form and size; and he settled them under the broad-pathed earth. Dwelling there, under the earth, in pain, they sat at the edge, at the limits of the great earth, suffering greatly for a long time, with much grief in their hearts. But Kronos' son and the other immortal gods whom beautiful-haired Rhea bore in love with Kronos brought them back up to the light once again, by the counsels of Earth.

Just like in the case of the Cyclopes, this passage makes it evident that Ouranos did not merely prevent the birth of the Hundred-Handers, but that he had imprisoned and bound them (l. 618: δῆσε κρατερῷ ἐνὶ δεσμῷ). It is also clear that he saw them after they were born, for he was able to note (and resent) their great size and formidable force (ll. 619–20). Finally, Hesiod specifies their exact position as "under the broad-pathed earth" (l. 620: ὑπὸ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης). They were dwelling under the earth (l. 621: ὑπὸ χθονὶ), more precisely "at the edge, at the limits of the great earth" (l. 622: εἵατ᾽ ἐπ᾽ ἐσχατιῇ μεγάλης ἐν πείρασι γαίης). *Peirata panton*, the "limits of everything" are at the entry to Tartaros, as Hesiod's *ekphrasis* of Tartaros clearly states in verses 735–38 and 807–10.[24]

In another passage, where the army of the assembled gods under Zeus' leadership in the Titanomachy is described, Hesiod reports that the Hundred-Handers (and possibly also the Cyclopes) were in Erebos during the period of their bondage (ll. 665–70):

πολέμου δ᾽ ἐλιλαίετο θυμὸς
μᾶλλον ἔτ᾽ ἢ τὸ πάροιθε· μάχην δ᾽ ἀμέγαρτον ἔγειραν
πάντες, θήλειαί τε καὶ ἄρσενες, ἤματι κείνῳ,
Τιτῆνές τε θεοὶ καὶ ὅσοι Κρόνου ἐξεγένοντο,
οὕς τε Ζεὺς ἐρέβεσφιν ὑπὸ χθονὸς ἧκε φόωσδε,
δεινοί τε κρατεροί τε, βίην ὑπέροπλον ἔχοντες.

24 For various interpretations of *peirata*, see Johnson 1999, 16, with bibliography.

> Their spirit craved war even more than before, and they all roused up dismal battle, the females and the males, on that day, both the Titan gods and those who were born from Kronos, and those whom Zeus sent up towards the light from Erebos, out from under the earth, terrible and mighty, with defiant strength.

Erebos is personified as the child of Chaos by Hesiod (l. 123). In the early epic, Erebos is the realm of utter darkness, regularly associated with both Hades and Tartaros; it is the opposite of the realm of light.[25] Hesiod later tells us that Hades has a house in Tartaros (ll. 767–69) and describes Tartaros as full of darkness (ll. 721–39). Is Erebos synonymous with Tartaros in the *Theogony*? This assumption seems to be further justified by the passage in which Hesiod narrates how Zeus punished Menoetius by hurling him "into Erebos" εἰς ἔρεβος (l. 515). On the basis of these passages, we submit that Erebos in Hesiod signifies a realm in the Underworld, and is synonymous with Tartaros.

There are several possible solutions to the problem of the exact location of the entire offspring of Ouranos during their imprisonment. The first and most economical solution is that everyone was detained in Tartaros together, the Titans unbound, and the Cyclopes and Hundred-Handers bound. This would comply with Clay's observation that Tartaros is a dynamic entity in the *Theogony*, one that develops and takes shape gradually and becomes an increasingly differentiated realm beneath Earth according to its function in the poem.[26] With the castration of Ouranos, Earth is separated from the sky, and only the Titans among Ouranos' progeny are able to escape from Tartaros because it did not yet possess a gate, and because they were not bound. The episode narrating the tale about the castration of Ouranos (ll. 163–82) clearly reveals that the Titans were not bound, for Kronos is able to deftly use both of his hands (ll. 178–80) in order to castrate his father, and there is no mention of any preparatory untying of Kronos. The bound children of the Earth and Sky had to wait for Zeus in order to be liberated.[27]

The second option is that every group of deities experienced a different fate: Whereas the Titans were not even allowed to be born and were kept in

25 West 1966, comm. ad v. 123.

26 Clay 2003, 16.

27 Apollodoros offers an alternative account: The Hundred-Handers and the Cyclopes were chained and placed in Tartaros (specifically) by Ouranos (1.1.2), they were released by the Titans (1.1.4), and subsequently bound and imprisoned by Kronos again (1.1.5) and then released by Zeus for the second time (1.2.1). On various versions of the myth about the Titans, see Bremmer 2008, 73–99 with bibliography.

Gaia's womb, the Cyclopes and Hundred-Handers were born but were subsequently punished with bondage and imprisonment in two different places underneath the earth.

The third option is that there were two groups of deities who experienced two different types of punishment – the Titans were not allowed to exit Gaia's womb, whereas the Cyclopes and the Hundred-Handers were detained together in Tartaros and bound.[28] Glenn Most perceives the reference to "these, who came forth from the Earth and Sky as the most terrible of their children" in verses 154–55 as unclear and comments: "apparently only the last two sets of three children each, the Cyclopes and the Hundred-Handers, are meant, and not additionally the first set of twelve Titans."[29] This would mean that the Titans were not maltreated by Ouranos in any way and that Kronos castrated his father solely in order to help his mother, and not in order to liberate himself and his siblings. This interpretation would also imply that Gaia's situation was not in any way improved after the castration of Ouranos, but that she could at least not fear the prospect of having further offspring with him.

Be that as it may, the passages discussed above do strongly imply that at least some of Ouranos' progeny experienced a *katabasis* as a form of punishment. They were sent to a place that was both dark and underneath Earth, which suggests Tartaros, but Hesiod is not explicit on this point.[30] After the castration of Ouranos, the Titans were able to perform an *anabasis* (be it from Gaia's womb, or from Tartaros – if they were imprisoned to begin with), but the two sets of bound divinities, the Cyclopes and the Hundred-Handers, remained detained.

In the first part of his theogonic narrative, Hesiod instructs that there are powerful forces to be gained from the Underworld domain. A *katabasis* enables the Cyclopes to find the thunderbolt and the lightning "which huge Earth had concealed before" (l. 505). In addition, we also learn that a *katabasis* alone is not an effective way to constrain the gods, for what goes down does come up again, unless bondage is applied as an additional measure of constraint. It is, in our opinion, telling that Hesiod does not describe the Titans as strong when they are born, and yet they are the ones who are set free after the castration of Ouranos, whereas both the Cyclopes and the Hundred-Handers are

28 West 1966, comm. ad v. 158 seems to follow this line of argument as he suggests that the Titans were detained in a different place from the Hundred-Handers and the Cyclopes, who were placed in an "infernal prison."

29 Most 2006, 15, n. 8.

30 Similarly, West 1966, comm. ad v. 618: "What Hesiod tells us of the place where they were bound indicates that it was Tartaros, but he avoids saying so outright."

characterized as exceedingly mighty (ll. 146, 148 and 153), and they are the ones who remain imprisoned.[31]

Zeus' *Katabaseis*

After the castration of Ouranos, Kronos establishes his reign. He started his rein by freeing his siblings, yet he continued it by swallowing his own offspring from Rhea because he feared that one of them would challenge his supremacy (ll. 459–65). He did not repeat Ouranos' mistake of trusting his female partner, so he made a prison out of his own belly. Whereas Ouranos' strategy was bullying, Kronos' was micro-managing. Yet, like every leader who is over-stressed and over-stretched (in his case, literally), Kronos was bound to make a mistake. And so an oversight did indeed happen when Rheia, on advice of Ouranos and Gaia, presented him with a stone instead of an infant Zeus.

When Zeus grew strong, he forced Kronos to release all his captive children (ll. 494–96). Immediately following this passage, Hesiod provides an outline of Zeus' management strategy, which has four cornerstones: learn from your predecessors' mistakes; listen to good advice; make maximum use of bondage; and harness the powerful Underworld forces. Zeus not only frees his siblings from Kronos' belly, he also frees his uncles, and thus gains powerful allies. In the passages quoted above, Hesiod outlines how Zeus first released the Cyclopes from Ouranos' bonds and, by doing this, secured his first decisive advantage, a set of excellent management tools: thunder, the blazing thunderbolt and the lightning (ll. 503–6) "which huge Earth had concealed before. Relying on these, he rules over mortals and immortals." This passage makes it clear that there are powerful weapons of destruction to be gained from underneath Earth and that the untying of the Cyclopes enabled Zeus to exploit the potent forces of the Underworld. Unlike his grandfather Ouranos, who was undone by the adamantine sickle from the Earth, Zeus is able to appropriate the chthonic instruments of destruction and to put them to use against his enemies.

Hesiod does not specify the exact manner in which Zeus untied the Cyclopes, but, since they were underneath Earth and could not get out due to being bound, it is logical to assume that Zeus accomplished a *katabasis* in order to obtain the Cyclopes as allies. It is the *katabasis* and the subsequent *anabasis* which enables Zeus to gain his weapons and allies, as it will be a *katabasis* and

31 Unless one sides with Most 2006, 15, n. 8 who argues that the Titans were never imprisoned to begin with.

the subsequent *anabasis* of Zeus and his siblings which will tip the war against the Titans decisively in Zeus' favour.

In a series of proleptic episodes, Hesiod represents Zeus as a cunning deviser of manifold punishments. By now, we have seen that Ouranos devises only two management strategies: imprisonment underneath or within Earth and bondage in Tartaros. He does not release anyone, which proves disastrous. Kronos releases his siblings, but imprisons his offspring in his own belly. Kronos' approach to torture is one-size-fits-all, and also proves fatal. Zeus, however, has something different and appropriate in store for every kind of creature and every type of offense. The gifts of the Cyclopes, the thunder and lightning, are Zeus' most essential weapons, which he uses to 'manage' both mortals and immortals. In ll. 514–25, Hesiod represents Zeus' vengeance upon the unruly children of Iapetos and Klymene: Menoitios he hurls into Erebos, striking him with a smoking thunderbolt; he places Atlas in Tartaros to hold the sky (the location in Tartaros is specified later, in verses 746–50); Prometheus is bound to a pillar and tormented by the eagle. Far from the one-size-fits-all model of punishment which his father practiced, Zeus creatively combines and experiments with manifold chastisements. His innovative approach is also evident in the case of punishments reserved for humans: famously, Zeus devised for them a beautiful and terrible evil, Pandora, the ancestor of women and the female kind, to whom men are bound for eternity.

Zeus gained a decisive advantage over the Titans and won the ten-year long war by harnessing yet another power hidden underneath Earth: the Hundred-Handers.[32] In the passage we quoted above (ll. 617–26) Hesiod recounts how Zeus freed the Hundred-Handers who were bound and imprisoned by Ouranos. It is significant to note that in this particular passage, Hesiod does briefly recount a *katabasis* of Zeus and his siblings, for he states that they "brought them (sc. the Hundred-Handers) up into the light" (l. 625: ἀνήγαγον ἐς φάος).

The two *katabaseis* of Zeus gained him a decisive advantage and enabled him to first establish his reign and then defeat the Titans forever. Furthermore, apart from the Cyclopes and the Hundred-Handers, Zeus harnessed a third formidable force from the Underworld – the mighty river Styx.[33] In a proleptic passage about Styx and her progeny (ll. 386–403), Hesiod stresses that it was Styx "first of all" (l. 397) who joined forces with Zeus,[34] and who was set to be the great oath for the gods. We shall soon see that it is Iris' occasional

32 On the role of Hundred-Handers in the *Titanomachy*, Mondi 1986, 27–32.

33 On the role of Styx in the *Theogony*, Lye 2009 with bibliography.

34 On the implications of Styx as the first ally of Zeus, Lye 2009, 18–19.

katabaseis to Styx that enables Zeus to resolve the divine conflicts by forcing them to swear the binding oath by her water. The importance of *katabasis* in the establishment of Zeus' reign is remarkable: his first *katabasis* results in the liberation of the Cyclopes who give him the thunder and lightning, his second *katabasis* results in the liberation of the Hundred-Handers, who represent the decisive weapon in the war against the Titans, and the third *katabasis*, which Iris occasionally accomplishes on Zeus' behalf, enables Zeus to control other deities by relying on the power of oath.

The untying and the *anabasis* of the Hundred-Handers tipped the balance of the Titanomachy decisively in favour of the Olympians. A horrible, final battle ensues, and in his description of the tumult Hesiod mentions Tartaros explicitly for the first time since verse 119 (ll. 680–82):

> […] πεδόθεν δὲ τινάσσετο μακρὸς Ὄλυμπος
> ῥιπῇ ὕπ᾽ ἀθανάτων, ἔνοσις δ᾽ ἵκανε βαρεῖα
> τάρταρον ἠερόεντα ποδῶν αἰπεῖά τ᾽ ἰωὴ […]

> High Olympos trembled from its very bottom under the rush of the immortals, and a deep shuddering from their feet reached murky Tartaros.

This mention of Tartaros is surely proleptic, since the defeated Titans will soon be detained in this very place (ll. 711–19):[35]

> ἐκλίνθη δὲ μάχη· πρὶν δ᾽ ἀλλήλοις ἐπέχοντες
> ἐμμενέως ἐμάχοντο διὰ κρατερὰς ὑσμίνας.
> οἱ δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἐνὶ πρώτοισι μάχην δριμεῖαν ἔγειραν,
> Κόττος τε Βριάρεώς τε Γύγης τ᾽ ἄατος πολέμοιο·
> οἵ ῥα τριηκοσίας πέτρας στιβαρέων ἀπὸ χειρῶν
> πέμπον ἐπασσυτέρας, κατὰ δ᾽ ἐσκίασαν βελέεσσι
> Τιτῆνας· καὶ τοὺς μὲν ὑπὸ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης
> πέμψαν καὶ δεσμοῖσιν ἐν ἀργαλέοισιν ἔδησαν,
> νικήσαντες χερσὶν ὑπερθύμους περ ἐόντας.

> And the battle inclined to one side. For earlier, advancing against one another they had battled incessantly in mighty combats. But then among the foremost Kottos and Briareus and Gyges, insatiable of war, roused up bitter battle; and they hurled three hundred boulders from their massive

35 On prolepsis in the *Theogony*, Stoddard 2004, 145–53 with bibliography.

> hands one after another and overshadowed the Titans with their missiles. They sent them down under the broad-pathed earth and bound them in distressful bonds after they had gained victory over them with their hands, high-spirited though they were.

Topography of Tartaros, as Seen by the Titans: A First Ekphrastic *Katabasis*

The Hundred-Handers have fulfilled their task and the Titans are defeated. Immediately their punishment is presented: bondage and imprisonment under the earth. This will be their eternal dwelling-place, and only now does Hesiod provide a thorough and detailed description of the Underworld abode (ll. 711–817). This section of the *Theogony* was for a long time perceived as a later addition, a confused patchwork of many interpolators – Jacoby counted eight in total.[36] West and Solmsen reject only 11 and 12 lines respectively,[37] whereas more recent studies follow Hans Schwabl, who perceives the entire section as the work of one person.[38] Building on Schwabl's arguments, Mark Northrup maintained that the passage is genuinely Hesiodic and demonstrated persuasively that it is topographically coherent and thematically compatible with the rest of the *Theogony*.[39] Northrup also pointed out a fact neglected by the other critics: Hesiod's section on Tartaros is an *ekphrasis*, in the mode of the Homeric *Shield of Achilles*. He highlights the way each description "is also closely connected with the larger scope of the preceding narrative."[40] As war and peace are contrasted in the shield description, according to Northrup, the Tartaros *ekphrasis* "emphasizes the qualitative as well as the quantitative/physical differences between the upper (positive) and lower (negative) worlds."[41]

Building on Northrup's discussion, we, too, perceive the Tartaros section as an *ekphrasis*, but an *ekphrasis* in which the Titans function as the focalizers. This section is an instance of embedded focalization,

36 Jacoby 1930, 22–27.

37 West 1966, comm. ad vv. 720–819 rejects vv. 734–45; Solmsen 1970, and Solmsen 1982 reject vv. 807–19.

38 Schwabl 1966, 97–106.

39 Northrup 1979.

40 Northrup 1979, 36.

41 Northrup 1979, 36.

> which occurs when the primary narrator-focalizer adopts a character's focalization of a particular event and vocalizes it in the narrator-text as if it were his own reaction to or an assessment of the situation at hand. Using embedded focalization the narrator is able to put himself into an emotional position of a certain character and to switch temporarily to narrating the story through that character's eyes.[42]

There are two types of embedded focalization, explicit and implicit. As de Jong has demonstrated, in the *Iliad*, Homer uses verbs of perceiving, thinking, feeling, or speaking to introduce explicit embedded focalization.[43] Since Hesiod is not explicitly stating that the *ekphrasis* of Tartaros is what the Titans see upon their descent, but is instead adopting the characters' focalization of Tartaros and presenting it as if this were his own speech, we are dealing here with an instance of implicit embedded focalization.[44] Even though Hesiod does not say so explicitly, we posit that it is through the eyes of the Titans that we see and experience Tartaros. This would make Hesiod's Tartaros section both an *ekphrasis* and a *katabasis*. Furthermore, after the *katabasis* of the Titans, Hesiod depicts yet another descent into Tartaros. This second *katabasis* is not final, or a one-off event, but a regular journey made by Iris who is occasionally sent by Zeus to fetch the Stygian water (ll. 780–817).

The *ekphrasis* of Tartaros seamlessly follows the section on the Titanomachy. The Hundred-Handers tip the battle by hurling rocks on the Titans from above. Hesiod immediately transitions to explaining what happens to the Titans once they have been conquered: they are bound and hurled beneath the earth (ll. 717–18: ὑπὸ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης | πέμψαν). Now we are told how long a journey to Tartaros takes (ll. 720–25):

> τόσσον ἔνερθ' ὑπὸ γῆς ὅσον οὐρανός ἐστ' ἀπὸ γαίης·
> τόσσον γάρ τ' ἀπὸ γῆς ἐς τάρταρον ἠερόεντα.
> ἐννέα γὰρ νύκτας τε καὶ ἤματα χάλκεος ἄκμων
> οὐρανόθεν κατιών, δεκάτῃ κ' ἐς γαῖαν ἵκοιτο·
> [ἶσον δ' αὖτ' ἀπὸ γῆς ἐς τάρταρον ἠερόεντα·]
> ἐννέα δ' αὖ νύκτας τε καὶ ἤματα χάλκεος ἄκμων
> ἐκ γαίης κατιών, δεκάτῃ κ' ἐς τάρταρον ἵκοι.

42 Stoddard 2004, 117. On embedded focalization, see also Bal 1985, 100–18.

43 On explicit and implicit embedded focalization in the *Iliad*, de Jong 1987, 101–48.

44 On embedded focalization in Hesiod, Stoddard 2004, 117–25. Stoddard does not, however, discuss the description of Tartaros as an instance of implicit embedded focalization.

> As far down beneath the earth as the sky is above the earth, for it is just as far from the earth to murky Tartaros: for a bronze anvil, falling down from the sky for nine nights and days, on the tenth day would arrive at the earth; [and in turn it is the same distance from the earth to murky Tartaros;] and again, a bronze anvil, falling down from the earth for nine nights and days, on the tenth would arrive at Tartaros.

Having just heard that the Hundred-Handers hurled 300 rocks at the Titans, and that the defeated Titans were hurled beneath the earth, we posit that the audience is naturally led to connect the movements from the sky to the earth and from the earth to Tartaros with the stoning of the Titans and their Underworld journey. The anvil-example is used to explain the length of the fall because the anvil was a typical heavy moveable object (it still serves the same purpose in cartoons).[45] We now know that the force of gravity has the same effect on all objects, but the Ancients did not: even Aristotle believed that the heavier the object is, the faster it falls.[46] The group of twelve bound Titans falls downwards for a long time, and then they reach the bottom and look upwards. What they see is described in lines 726–28:

> τὸν πέρι χάλκεον ἕρκος ἐλήλαται· ἀμφὶ δέ μιν νὺξ
> τριστοιχὶ κέχυται περὶ δειρήν· αὐτὰρ ὕπερθε
> γῆς ῥίζαι πεφύασι καὶ ἀτρυγέτοιο θαλάσσης.

> Around this a bronze barricade is extended, and on both sides of it night is poured out threefold around its neck; and above it grow the roots of the earth and of the barren sea.

Not only does the audience experience Tartaros through the eyes of the Titans, but Tartaros actually takes shape and becomes a site with conspicuous landmarks in the course of this description. Some of the landmarks, such as the bronze gate, are placed in Tartaros specifically in order to detain the Titans.

45 Homer, *Iliad* 15.19: Zeus tied anvils to Hera's legs when he strung her up. West 1966, comm. ad v. 720 notes that Homer, too, describes the distance from the sky to the earth as equal to the distance of the earth to Hades (*Iliad* 8.16). However, Homer has Hephaistos falling from the sky to Lemnos in one day (*Iliad* 1.591–2). Stoddard 2004, 138 argues that Hesiod increases the distance between the earth and the Underworld (and, by analogy, of the sky to earth) in order to establish firmer boundaries between the world of the gods and that of men.

46 West 1966, comm. ad v. 722.

Having descended to the bottom of the pit, one's first thought would be of escape, but, as Hesiod next informs us, this hope is futile for the Titans (ll. 729–39):

> ἔνθα θεοὶ Τιτῆνες ὑπὸ ζόφῳ ἠερόεντι
> κεκρύφαται βουλῇσι Διὸς νεφεληγερέταο,
> χώρῳ ἐν εὐρώεντι, πελώρης ἔσχατα γαίης.
> τοῖς οὐκ ἐξιτόν ἐστι, θύρας δ' ἐπέθηκε Ποσειδέων
> χαλκείας, τεῖχος δ' ἐπελήλαται ἀμφοτέρωθεν.
> ἔνθα Γύγης Κόττος τε καὶ Ὀβριάρεως μεγάθυμος
> ναίουσιν, φύλακες πιστοὶ Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο.
> ἔνθα δὲ γῆς δνοφερῆς καὶ ταρτάρου ἠερόεντος
> πόντου τ' ἀτρυγέτοιο καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος
> ἑξείης πάντων πηγαὶ καὶ πείρατ' ἔασιν,
> ἀργαλέ' εὐρώεντα, τά τε στυγέουσι θεοί περ.
>
> That is where the Titan gods are hidden under murky gloom by the plans of the cloud-gatherer Zeus, in a dank place, at the farthest part of huge earth. They cannot get out, for Poseidon has set bronze gates upon it, and a wall is extended on both sides. That is where Gyges, Kottos, and great-spirited Obriareus dwell, the trusted guards of aegis-holding Zeus. That is where the sources and limits (*peirata*) of the dark earth are, and of murky Tartaros, of the barren sea, and of the starry sky, of everything, one after another, distressful, dank, things which even the gods hate.

Mark Northrup situates the gates above Tartaros, and sees the doors as a line of demarcation between the Underworld and the upper world.[47] The Titans are not only bound, they are imprisoned at the bottom of the Tartaros pit, and have the Hundred-Handers as their eternal jailers. Zeus takes every precaution and ensures that his adversaries will never threaten him again, for no other divinity thus far has been so securely detained. Having so outlined the safety measures Zeus undertook, Hesiod asserts that life in Tartaros is awful (ll. 740–44).

In two instances, Hesiod uses emotional language in order to express the hatred the gods feel for Tartaros (l. 739: τά τε στυγέουσι θεοί περ and ll. 743–44: δεινὸν δὲ καὶ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι τοῦτο τέρας). It is by using this emotional language and by assuming the divine perspective that Hesiod signals that the Titans are the focalizers in the Tartaros-description. The narrator not only lets

47 Northrup 1979, 24–25.

us see what his characters see, he also provides an insight into their emotional reaction to this horrible place.

Having explored the possible escape route by looking up, and having realized that there is no hope, the Titans look around and explore their new surroundings. Critics have long laboured over the exact location of the individual sites Hesiod mentions next.[48] We think that the problem can be solved by assuming that the rest of the passage is also focalized through the Titans who now look around and notice one thing after another (underscored by repeated ἔνθα).[49] They see the terrible houses of dark Night (ll. 744–45), Atlas holding the sky (ll. 746–48), the houses of Sleep and Death (ll. 758–66), the houses of Hades and Persephone with Kerberos (ll. 767–74) and the dwelling of Styx (ll. 775–79).

If we imagine the Titans trying to gain a sense of orientation in this new place, looking around, noticing one thing after another, we do not have to solve the impossible riddle of where exactly each thing is. We can simply note that all these landmarks are somewhere in Tartaros.

Topography of Tartaros, as Seen by Iris: A Second Ekphrastic *Katabasis*

What follows after the description of the dwelling of Styx is a lengthy excursus about the special role of Stygian water in the divine oath (ll. 780–806), which is introduced in the following way (ll. 780–88):

> παῦρα δὲ Θαύμαντος θυγάτηρ πόδας ὠκέα Ἶρις
> † ἀγγελίη πωλεῖται ἐπ' εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάσσης.
> ὁππότ' ἔρις καὶ νεῖκος ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν ὄρηται,
> καί ῥ' ὅστις ψεύδηται Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἐχόντων,
> Ζεὺς δέ τε Ἶριν ἔπεμψε θεῶν μέγαν ὅρκον ἐνεῖκαι

48 Johnson 1999, 11 offers an overview of previous attempts to make sense of Hesiod's description of Tartaros, and argues that Hesiod presents us not with a map, but with a "series of complementary images," "multiple representations of the same underlying reality." Expanding on Rowe 1983, Johnson 1999, 11 sees the Tartaros section as a testimony to Hesiod's propensity to provide "a number of distinct descriptions of a single thing." Ballabriga 1986 offers a wealth of important observations, especially in his fourth chapter, which focuses on *Theogony* 722–819, but his main interest lies in discussing the way Archaic Greeks conceived of space in general. In a forthcoming paper "Ties that Bind," Jenny Strauss Clay presents a new and ingenious solution to the problem of the topography of Tartarus. The piece is forthcoming in a volume edited by Clay and A. Vergados, *Teaching through Images*.

49 Hesiod, *Theogony* 729, 734, 736, 758, 767 and 775.

> τηλόθεν ἐν χρυσέῃ προχόῳ πολυώνυμον ὕδωρ,
> ψυχρόν, ὅ τ' ἐκ πέτρης καταλείβεται ἠλιβάτοιο
> ὑψηλῆς· πολλὸν δὲ ὑπὸ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης
> ἐξ ἱεροῦ ποταμοῖο ῥέει διὰ νύκτα μέλαιναν·
>
> Seldom does Thaumas' daughter, swift-footed Iris, travel to her (sc. Styx) with a message upon the broad back of the sea: whenever strife and quarrel arise among the immortals and one of those who have their mansions on Olympos tells a lie, Zeus sends Iris to bring from afar in a golden jug the great oath of the gods, the much-renowned water, icy, which pours down from a great, lofty crag. It flows abundantly from under the broad-pathed earth, from the holy river through the black night.

The difficulty here is in determining from where exactly Iris fetches this water, and it is unclear whether Iris visits Styx as a goddess in the Underworld, or is sent to fetch the Stygian water, which gushes forth on the earth's surface in the form of the waterfall. West suggested that Hesiod starts off with Styx as a goddess and could have switched to Styx as a waterfall in lines 785ff.[50] However, he also notes that "ἀγγελίῃ implies a formal summons to Styx herself."[51] If Iris travels to Tartaros in order to fetch the water, then lines 780ff. feature yet another *katabasis*, this time focalized by Iris. This would explain the reason why lines 807–17 essentially repeat the information provided in lines 730–39. It was this instance of repetition that lead West to bracket the first description of the entry to Tartaros (ll. 734–45), and Solmsen to reject the second (ll. 807–19). However, if we perceive lines 780–817 as a second *katabasis*, that of Iris, and a second description of Tartaros, this time focalized by Iris, then the second *ekphrasis* of Tartaros does indeed make sense as yet another instance of implicit embedded focalization. Let us take a closer look at it (ll. 807–17):

> ἔνθα δὲ γῆς δνοφερῆς καὶ ταρτάρου ἠερόεντος
> πόντου τ' ἀτρυγέτοιο καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος
> ἑξείης πάντων πηγαὶ καὶ πείρατ' ἔασιν,
> ἀργαλέ' εὐρώεντα, τά τε στυγέουσι θεοί περ.
> ἔνθα δὲ μαρμάρεαί τε πύλαι καὶ χάλκεος οὐδός,
> ἀστεμφὲς ῥίζῃσι διηνεκέεσσιν ἀρηρώς,
> αὐτοφυής· πρόσθεν δὲ θεῶν ἔκτοσθεν ἁπάντων

50 West 1966, 372 comm. ad v. 779.
51 West 1966, 373 comm. ad v. 784.

> Τιτῆνες ναίουσι, πέρην χάεος ζοφεροῖο.
> αὐτὰρ ἐρισμαράγοιο Διὸς κλειτοὶ ἐπίκουροι
> δώματα ναιετάουσιν ἐπ᾽ Ὠκεανοῖο θεμέθλοις,
> Κόττος τ᾽ ἠδὲ Γύγης ...
>
> That is where the sources and limits (*peirata*) of the dark earth are, and of murky Tartaros, of the barren sea, and of the starry sky, of everything, one after another, distressful, dank, things which even the gods hate. That is where the marble gates are and the bronze threshold, fitted together immovably upon continuous roots, self-generated; and in front, apart from all the gods, live the Titans, on the far side of the gloomy chasm. The celebrated helpers of loud-thundering Zeus live in mansions upon the foundations of Ocean, Kottos and Gyges.

This second *ekphrasis* clearly describes the abode of Tartaros after the Titans have settled there, as it lists all the unpleasant things that Iris sees and feelings she feels (l. 810: τά τε στυγέουσι θεοί περ) whenever she descends to fetch the Stygian water. Iris' *katabasis* serves an important purpose in the narrative, and it is yet another instance of the significant theogonic motif under discussion: again it is through the control of the potent Underworld forces that Zeus maintains his authority and rule on Olympos. The Stygian water, by which the gods swear, resolves divine conflicts and prevents them from lying. Those deities who break their oaths are placed in a coma-like state for a full year (l. 795), and spend the subsequent nine years in exile (ll. 800–4).[52]

Concluding Remarks

With the Titans defeated, bound, and imprisoned in Tartaros, they cease to represent a threat to Zeus. However, in this moment, Tartaros becomes, for the first time, a generative force, and, together with the Earth, produces the horrible monster Typhoeus (ll. 820–35).[53] Through this generative act, Tartaros reveals the powers which gave him the name – it "stirs, troubles, agitates, disturbs, routs, and upsets," for Typhoeus is a creature which challenges Zeus and threatens to overthrow his reign. Zeus' combat with Typhoeus causes chaos and wreaks havoc, the whole Earth is shaking, and even Hades and the Titans

52 On the divine oath, Bollack 1958, 31–35 and Lye 2009.

53 On the Typhoeus motif, see West 1966, comm. ad vv. 820–80; Ballabriga 1990 and Blaise 1992.

in Tartaros can feel the stirring and clamour, and are afraid (ll. 847–52). Finally, Zeus overpowers Typhoeus in a single combat and scorches him with his thunderbolt together with a large chunk of earth. Hesiod briefly explains how Typhoeus was punished (l. 868):

> ῥῖψε δέ μιν θυμῷ ἀκαχὼν ἐς τάρταρον εὐρύν.

> And he (sc. Zeus) hurled Typhoeus into broad Tartaros, grieving him in his spirit.

It is remarkable that Typhoeus was not bound, which is perhaps the reason why he was afterwards able to act – once again, as a force of nature which is a realization of Tartaros' formidable name (ll. 869–80):

> ἐκ δὲ Τυφωέος ἔστ' ἀνέμων μένος ὑγρὸν ἀέντων,
> νόσφι Νότου Βορέω τε καὶ ἀργεστέω Ζεφύροιο·
> οἵ γε μὲν ἐκ θεόφιν γενεήν, θνητοῖς μέγ' ὄνειαρ.
> αἱ δ' ἄλλαι μὰψ αὖραι ἐπιπνείουσι θάλασσαν·
> αἳ δή τοι πίπτουσαι ἐς ἠεροειδέα πόντον,
> πῆμα μέγα θνητοῖσι, κακῇ θυίουσιν ἀέλλῃ·
> ἄλλοτε δ' ἄλλαι ἄεισι διασκιδνᾶσί τε νῆας
> ναύτας τε φθείρουσι· κακοῦ δ' οὐ γίνεται ἀλκὴ
> ἀνδράσιν, οἳ κείνῃσι συνάντωνται κατὰ πόντον.
> αἱ δ' αὖ καὶ κατὰ γαῖαν ἀπείριτον ἀνθεμόεσσαν
> ἔργ' ἐρατὰ φθείρουσι χαμαιγενέων ἀνθρώπων,
> πιμπλεῖσαι κόνιός τε καὶ ἀργαλέου κολοσυρτοῦ.

> From Typhoeus comes the strength of moist-blowing winds – apart from Notos and Boreas and clear Zephyros, for these are from the gods by descent, a great boon for mortals. But the other breezes blow at random upon the sea: falling upon the murky sea, a great woe for mortals, they rage with an evil blast; they blow now one way, now another, and scatter the boats, and destroy the sailors; and there is no safeguard against this evil for men who encounter them upon the sea. And on the boundless, flowering earth too, they destroy the lovely works of earth-born human beings, filling them with dust and with distressful confusion.

Even greatly diminished and imprisoned in Tartaros, his son Typhoeus is able "to stir, shake, trouble and agitate." However, his destructive force now troubles the mortals, not the gods.

After this final challenge, Zeus' reign becomes secure and stable; he is able to lord over the gods and men without fear. He succeeded because he was the first divine king who was able to harness the powers of Tartaros and to utilize bondage and release from bonds in order to punish adversaries and to forge alliances.

In the *Iliad*, the horror of bondage and imprisonment in Tartaros is felt only as a distant echo. In one instance, Zeus gathers the Olympian gods to an assembly and warns them not to help the Greeks or the Trojans. Zeus threatens to hurl into Tartaros whoever disobeys.[54] In another passage from the same book, Zeus mocks Hera and says that he does not care about her anger, even if she should go to the depths of Tartaros.[55] What would Hera's *katabasis* accomplish? Jenny Clay interprets the passage to mean that Hera would raise a revolt in Tartaros.[56] Surely one such revolt could only be possible if Hera were to untie the Titans, and one might wonder if Zeus' carefree attitude is justified here (especially in light of the events narrated in the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*, where it is Hera who, in alliance with the Titans, gives birth to the terrible monster Typhaon [ll. 305–56]). Sarah Harrel provides a thorough discussion of the Tartaros motif in the *Iliad,* the *Catalogue of Women,* and the *Homeric Hymns* and, following Clay,[57] posits that the mere mention of Tartaros recalls theogonic myths.[58] She concludes that the threat of hurling a deity into Tartaros serves to remind the gods of Zeus' supreme authority. This must be correct, for, if we learn something from the *Theogony*, it is that whoever controls Tartaros maintains supreme power. However, as we see in the *Iliad* and in the *Homeric Hymns*, the Olympian peace is fragile: Zeus would not have to threaten and intimidate the other gods if his supremacy were completely unchallenged. The example of the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* also serves as a reminder that the powers of Tartaros are still active. Imprisonment in Tartaros can only be completely effective if it is accompanied by bondage, as is evident from Hesiod's tale about Typhoeus.

After Hesiod, it is bondage rather than hurling into Tartaros that is best attested as an effective punishment for unruly divinities. As we can see from Table 4.1 below, bondage features prominently in both myth and ritual: gods tie each other, and even men tie gods in both myth and ritual in order to control or harness their powers. Imprisonment alone (Table 4.2) is rare, perhaps because already Hesiod demonstrated how ineffective it can be.

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54 Homer, *Iliad* 8.10–16.

55 Homer, *Iliad* 8.477–83.

56 Clay 1989, 12.

57 Clay 1989.

58 Harrel 1991.

TABLE 4.1 *Examples of bondage in myth and ritual*[a]

a) Gods tie Gods	**b) Men tie Gods**
Apollo (briefly) tied by Goddesses[b]	Aktaion by Orchomenians (via Delphian Apollo)[c]
Ares and Aphrodite bound by Hephaistos[d]	Aphrodite Morpho by the Spartans[e]
Hera bound by Zeus[f]	Apollo by the citizens of Tyre[h]
Hera bound by Hephaistos[g]	Ares by Iconians (via Clarian Apollo)[j]
Hermes (almost) bound by Apollo[i]	Ares by Syedrans (via Clarian Apollo)[l]
Kronos bound by Zeus and freed[k]	Artemis by the Erythreans[n]
Prometheus by Zeus[m]	Artemis Eurynome by Phigalians[p]
Zeus (almost) bound by Poseidon, Athena and Hera[o]	Artemis Lyaia (?)[q]
	Dionysos by the Chians[r]
	Dionysos by the pirates[s]
	Dionysos by Pentheus[t]
	Enyalios by Spartans[u]
	Enyalios by the Thracians[v]
	Hera of Samos by Carians/pirates[w]
	Kronos by the Rhodians[x]
	Nike by the Athenians[y]
	Tyche by Constantine[z]
	Zeus in Panamara[aa]

[a] The overview is limited to the Greek world and the magical sphere is excluded; furthermore, *Baumgottheiten* such as Ephesian Artemis, Artemis Karyatis, Artemis Hemera or Phakelitis without explicit attestations of binding rituals, or at least strong textual clues of such practices, are excluded as well.

[b] *Homeric hymn to Apollo* 3.127–29.

[c] Pausanias 9.38.5; Fontenrose 1968, 83–85; Graf 1985, 81; Steiner 2001, 10 and 140–41.

[b] Homer, *Odyssey* 8.296–99. Meuli 1975, 1077–80.

[e] Pausanias 3.15.11. Meuli 1975, 1039, n. 8; Faraone 1992, 136–40.

[f] Homer, *Iliad* 15.16–28. Whitman 1970.

[g] Pindar fr. 283 Snell; Plato, *Republic* 378d; fragmentary Homeric hymn (a) and a hymn by Alkaios (fr. 349 a–e Voigt) on which see Merkelbach 1971, 549–51 and West 2001, 3 with nn. 7 and 8 (an overview of sources, including the *Hymn to Dionysos* and the visual material).

[h] Diodoros of Sicily 17.41.8; Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 24; Curtius Rufus 4.3.21. Meuli 1975, 1080–81; Graf 1985, 81.

[i] *Homeric hymn to Hermes* 408–14.

[j] Graf 1985, 81; Merkelbach and Stauber 14/07/01.

TABLE 4.1 (cont.)

[k] Hesiod, *Works and Days* 169a. Meuli 1975, 1039, n. 9. This passage is very probably a late interpolation, see Most 2006, 101, n. 10.

[l] *SEG* 41, 1991, 1411; Merkelbach and Stauber 18/19/01. Meuli 1975, 1077–1080; Graf 1985, 81.

[m] Hesiod, *Theogony* 521–33; Pindar, *Olympian* 2.77; *Pythian* 4.291; Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 97 and 113. Meuli 1975, 1068–69, Marston 2007, 121–33.

[n] Polemon Periegetes (*FHG* 90 = Scholia to Pindar, *Olympian* 7.95 a). Meuli 1975, 1039; Graf 1985, 82–84.

[o] Homer, *Iliad* 1.399–406, Thetis frees Zeus from bonds and calls Briareus to guard him. Meuli 1975, 1039, n. 10.

[p] Pausanias 8.41.6. Meuli 1975, 1039, n. 8; Faraone 1992, 136–40.

[q] Diomedes, *Gramm. Lat.* I, 486, 28; in this case, the evidence for binding in cult or, more generally, for a festival involving binding and releasing is weak, see Meuli 1975, 1049. The same is true of the rituals for Artemis Orthia (Lygodesma); on this see Pausanias 3.16.7–11 with Meuli 1975, 1044–47; Graf 1985, 82–87 and 89; Faraone 1992, 136–40. Her epithet, Orthia/Lygodesma does not refer to a ritual of binding with willow tree, but to her upright position, as she is reputed to have been found in a willow thicket.

[r] Polemon Periegetes (*FHG* 3, 146 = Scholia to Pindar, *Olympian* 7.95a).

[s] *Homeric hymn to Dionysos* 7.9–14; cf. Meuli 1975, 1039 and 1065–68; Graf 1985, 81 and 83–89.

[t] Euripides, *Bacchae* 355–57, 434–40, 505 and 515–18; Dionysos frees himself, 614.

[u] Pausanias 3.15.7. Meuli 1975, 1039, n. 8 and 1077–80.

[v] *P.Oxy.* 10 1241 col. IV 99–106, 2nd c. CE, (LDAB 4636, Pack 2069).

[w] Athenaios 15.11–15 672a–e (from 3rd c. BCE historian Menodotos of Samos = *FGrHist* 541 F1). For this and further sources, see Meuli 1975, 1059–64; Graf 1985, 82–83 and 93–96; Chaniotis 1988, 53–54; Dillery 2005, 511–15.

[x] Graf 1985, 93 with n. 124, on Kronia in general; for a full discussion see Versnel 1987, 126–31; Versnel 1994, 129–35.

[y] Pausanias 3.15.7. Meuli 1975, 1039 and 1077. Strictly speaking, the Athenian Nike is rather an amputee than a chained or in impeded image, since her wings were cut off.

[z] *Patria Konstantinoupoleos* Preger p. 166.

[aa] *I.Stratonikeia* 310. Meuli 1975, 1079.

TABLE 4.2 *Imprisonment in myth and ritual*

a) Gods imprison Gods	**b) Men imprison Gods/divine attributes**
Ares bound and imprisoned by Ephialtes and Otos[a]	Artemis Soteira by citizens of Pellene[b] Dionysos Aisymnetes by Patrans[c] Palladium at Troy (Palladium at Rome)[d] Gorgon's lock[e]

[a] Homer, *Iliad* 5.385–91. Meuli 1975, 1077–80.
[b] Pausanias 7.27.3. Meuli 1975, 1044, n. 3; Graf 1985, 84–85; Faraone 1992, 136–40.
[c] Suda, s.v. μέλαν; Pausanias 7.19–21. Meuli 1975, 1066; Graf 1985, 81–86; Faraone 1992, 136–40.
[d] Palladium at Troy: Ps.-Plutarch, *Moralia* 309–10; Derkylos *FHG* 4.377.5; Palladium at Rome is inferred from Juvenal, *Satires* 6; see on this is Faraone 1992, 136–40 and esp. 139 with n. 8.
[e] Pausanias 8.47.5; Apollodoros, *Bibliotheka* 2.7.3; Faraone 1992, 136–40.

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CHAPTER 5

Introducing Oneself in Hades

Two 'Orphic' Formulas Reconsidered

Scott Scullion

This chapter only goes halfway toward addressing the theme 'Round Trip to Hades' as it deals with a one-way journey, but we shall catch a glimpse of a party of travellers preparing for their return trip as we pass with applicants for permanent residency along their distinct route. The so-called 'Orphic' gold leaves or tablets[1] discussed here combine the functions of itinerary and certificate of qualification for such applicants, who seek not only a permanent but a happy – even divine – existence in the Underworld.[2] Composed in sometimes faulty dactylic hexameters, inscribed in minute letters on small leaves of gold, and deposited with the dead from at least as early as the later fifth century BCE, the texts accompany those purified and initiated in special rituals in this world and guide their process of admission to the realms of the blessed in the Underworld.

The Big Questions

The extant texts fall into various types, and I reinterpret here two recurrent formulas of introduction to be used by initiates on their arrival in Hades. Close study of these formulas is interesting in itself, but also has potential implications for some of the broader questions of interpretation of the gold leaves. There are many controversial questions about these texts, from whether we are justified in calling them 'Orphic' in the first place, and what we mean

1 Texts and translations of the gold leaves are my own. I employ abbreviated references to standard editions as follows: L(amella) references (L1 etc.) for the numeration of Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008 (who print a full concordance of numerations at 242–44); *OF* for the numeration of Bernabé 2004; GJ for the numeration of Graf and Johnston 2013 (concordance at 48–49).

2 Cf. θεὸς ἐγένου ἐξ ἀνθρώπου, "A god you have become from a man" (L8 = *OF* 487 = 3 GJ, l. 4); ὄλβιε καὶ μακαριστέ, θεὸς δ' ἔσηι ἀντὶ βροτοῖο, "Fortunate and most blessed man, a god you will be instead of a mortal" (L9 = *OF* 488 = 5 GJ, l. 9), both in 4th-c. BCE texts from Thurii in S. Italy; cf Herrero de Jáuregui's contribution in this volume.

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by the term Orphic, both in general and in particulars, if we do use it, to what background contexts we can reconstruct in light of the texts – poetic, conceptual, theological, ritual, social, regional, diachronic – and their relationship and relative importance. There have been major shifts in our view of these texts in recent decades, primarily as new ones have been discovered. Many scholars once regarded them as Orphic-Pythagorean and dismissed the connection with Dionysos and Dionysiac cult that subsequently published leaves have demonstrated and everyone now accepts; the key passages are the mention of Bacchic initiates, *bakchoi*, in one text and of *Bakchios* as god of the initiation ritual in another.[3] Indeed the pendulum has swung so far that it is now not implausible to go to the opposite extreme of regarding the texts as Dionysiac and rejecting any connection with 'Orphism'.[4] A new text mentioning "rites of Demeter Chthonia and Mountain Mother" raises new questions by broadening the range of gods associated with the initiation and purification rituals.[5]

A fundamental question in recent discussion is that of the presence and role in these texts of consistently Orphic concepts, or indeed of consistently developed concepts of any kind, as opposed to religious, ritual and poetic motifs which individual ritual specialists or 'Orphic initiators' have cobbled together into satisfactorily functional complexes that varied considerably from place to place and over time.[6] This is one of the 'big questions' for which my observations have possible implications, but I will not take (and do not have)

3 L1 = *OF* 474 = 1 GJ (Hipponion, S. Italy, c. 400 BCE), 15–16: καὶ δὴ καὶ σὺ πιὼν ὁδὸν ἔρχεα⟨ι⟩ ἅν τε καὶ ἄλλοι | μύσται καὶ βάκχοι ἱερὰν στείχουσι κλε⟨ε⟩ινοί, "[…] and you too, having drunk, will go along the path, the sacred path that other initiates and *bakchoi* pass along in glory"; L7A = *OF* 485 = 26a GJ (Pelinna, Thessaly, late 4th c. BCE), 1–2: νῦν ἔθανες καὶ νῦν ἐγένου, τρισόλβιε, ἄματι τῶιδε. | εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόναι σ' ὅτι Β⟨άκ⟩χιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε, "Now you have died and now you have been born, thrice-fortunate one, on this day. Say to Persephone that Bacchios himself released you."

4 See West 1983, 26; Calame 1995; Schlesier 2001, 166–70. Edmonds 2004, 29–110, esp. 103–4 and Parker and Stamatopoulou 2004, 23–27 with 24, n. 89 are sceptical but do not reject (broadly) Orphic connections. Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 179–205 and 2011 defend a firmly Orphic interpretation; cf. Graf and Johnston 2013, esp. 90–93, 193–94.

5 L13A = *OF* 493A = 28 GJ (Pherae, Thessaly, later 4th or earlier 3rd c. BCE), published with commentary by Parker and Stamatopoulou 2004: πέμπε με πρὸς μυστῶν θιάσους· ἔχω ὄργια – ×] | Δήμητρος Χθονίας ⟨τε⟩ τέλη καὶ Μητρὸς Ὀρείας, "Send me to the congregations of initiates. I have [the solemn rituals?], the rites of Demeter Chthonia and Mountain Mother." Βάκχου is a very improbable supplement of the first line (Parker and Stamatapoulou 2004, 10–11), σεμνὰ a not implausible conjecture (ibid. 10) which gives good sense, cf. Schuddeboom 2009, 227–28.

6 See the works cited in n. 4, and on Orphism in general the recent (sceptical) discussion of Edmonds 2013, with further references.

a firm stand on it. In the inevitably somewhat circular process by which we shift back and forth between composing the big picture and poring over the details, it is detail-work I concentrate on here – in one case what may seem a minute and fussy detail, the placement of a comma – because it seems to me possible to argue confidently for a revised interpretation of two key phrases, whose significance in the bigger picture I glance at but make no pretense of pronouncing upon.

Arriving in Hades

By way of general orientation, let us begin with the longest form of these texts, from fourth-century-BCE southern Italy. Text L1 (= *OF* 474 = 1 GJ) of c. 400 BCE is from Hipponion:

Μναμοσύνας τόδε ἔργον. ἐπεὶ ἂν μέλληισι θανεῖσθαι
εἰς Ἀίδαο δόμους εὐήρεας, ἔστ' ἐπὶ δ⟨ε⟩ξιὰ κρήνα,
πὰρ δ' αὐτὰν ἑστακῦα λευκὰ κυπάρισ⟨σ⟩ος·
ἔνθα κατερχόμεναι ψυχαὶ νεκύων ψύχονται.
ταύτας τᾶς κράνας μηδὲ σχεδὸν ἐγγύθεν ἔλθηις.
πρόσθεν δὲ εὑρήσεις τᾶς Μναμοσύνας ἀπὸ λίμνας
ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ προρέον· φύλακες δὲ ἐπύπερθεν ἔασι.
οἳ δέ σε εἰρήσονται ἐν⟨ὶ⟩ φρασὶ πευκαλίμαισι
ὅτ⟨τ⟩ι δὴ ἐξερέεις Ἄιδος σκότος ὀρφ⟨ν⟩ήεντος.
εἶπον· 'Γῆς παῖ⟨ς⟩ εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος·
δίψαι δ' εἰμ' αὖος καὶ ἀπόλλυμαι· ἀλ⟨λ⟩ὰ δότ' ὦκα
ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ πιέναι τῆς Μνημοσύνης ἀπὸ λίμ⟨ν⟩ης.'
καὶ δή τοι ἐρέουσιν {ι}ὑποχθονίωι †βασιλε̃ϊ
καὶ {δή τοι} δώσουσι πιεῖν τᾶς Μναμοσύνας ἀπ[ὸ] λίμνας
καὶ δὴ καὶ σὺ πιὼν ὁδὸν ἔρχεα⟨ι⟩ ἅν τε καὶ ἄλλοι
μύσται καὶ βάκχοι ἱερὰν στείχουσι κλε⟨ε⟩ινοί.

13 βασιλε̃ϊ lam. : βασιλῆϊ Merkelbach : βασιλεί⟨αι⟩ West cf. p. 87.

This is the work of Memory. When you are about to die into the well-built halls of Hades, there is a spring on the right and beside it stands a white cypress: there souls of the dead descend and refresh themselves. (*5*) Do not go anywhere near this spring! Further on you will find cold water flowing forth from the lake of Memory, and there are guardians over it. These will ask you, with their sharp wits, what you are seeking in the darkness of gloomy Hades. (*10*) Say "I am a child of Earth and starry

> Sky, and I am parched with thirst and dying, but grant me quickly to drink cold water from the lake of Memory." And they will speak to the chthonian king [queen?], and will grant you to drink from the lake of Memory, and you too, having drunk, will go along the path, the sacred path that other initiates and *bacchoi* pass along in glory.

Tablet L3 (= *OF* 476 = 2 GJ [Petelia, S. Italy, 4th c. BCE]) is closely similar, but has two important changes. When the (female) deceased says to the guardians of the water of Memory Γῆς παῖς εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος, "I am a child of Earth and starry Sky" she is to add αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γένος οὐράνιον· τόδε δ' ἴστε καὶ αὐτοί, "but my line of descent is heavenly – this you of course know yourselves" (ll. 6–7). So too – these changes are doubtless related – this deceased will not merely follow the path of other initiates and *bakchoi*; rather καὶ τότ' ἔπειτ' ἄ[λλοισι μεθ'] ἡρώεσσι ἀνάξει[ς], "and thereafter you will rule among the other heroes" (l. 11).

Descent from *Gē* and/or *Ouranos*?

I begin by reinterpreting the formula of introduction "I am a child of [...]," which occurs (with the variants υἱός, 'son' and, once, θυγάτηρ, 'daughter') on eleven tablets.[7] Scholars find it odd that in L3 and also in L2 and L6 the initiate is to say "I am a child of Earth and starry Heaven, *Ouranos*" and then add "but my line of descent is heavenly, *ouranion*." Why a contrast with αὐτάρ, 'but'? Does the claim of heavenly descent contradict Earth's parentage? Zuntz concludes that "the second verse is a later addition, quite incompatible with the first; an addition made when it was felt that descent from Heaven was the essential qualification for bliss in the other world."[8] I suggest rather that we print γῆς παῖς εἰμι καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος, "I am a child of earth and starry sky" and that this is not a genealogical statement at all. Greek writing did not distinguish capitalized, personified 'Earth' and 'Sky' from the uncapitalized common nouns, both παῖς, 'child' and υἱός, 'son' can be used metaphorically, and the meaning is simply 'I am someone from the upper world, the world bounded by

7 L1, L2 (= *OF* 475 = 8 GJ, Entella, Sicily, 3rd c. BCE?), L3, L4 (= *OF* 477 = 25 GJ, Pharsalos, Thessaly, 350–300 BCE); with υἱός L5A, L5B, L5C, L5E, L5F (= *OF* 478–479–480–482–483 = 10–11–12–13–14 GJ, all Eleutherna, Crete, 2nd–1st c. BCE), L6 (= *OF* 484 = 29 GJ, Thessaly, mid-4th c. BCE); with θυγάτηρ for υἱός L5D (= *OF* 481 = 16 GJ, Eleutherna, Crete, 2nd–1st c. BCE).

8 Zuntz 1971, 366.

earth and sky.' The phrase 'earth and starry sky' is formulaic, and is used here much as in a passage of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (33–37) whose context is also the transition from the world above to the world below:

> ὄφρα μὲν οὖν γαῖάν τε καὶ οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα
> λεῦσσε θεὰ καὶ πόντον ἀγάρροον ἰχθυόεντα
> αὐγάς τ᾽ ἠελίου, ἔτι δ᾽ ἤλπετο μητέρα κεδνὴν
> ὄψεσθαι καὶ φῦλα θεῶν αἰειγενετάων,
> τόφρα οἱ ἐλπὶς ἔθελγε μέγαν νόον ἀχνυμένης περ·

> As long as the goddess could still see the earth and starry sky and the strong-flowing fishy sea and the rays of the sun, and still expected to see her good mother and the families of ever-living gods, for so long hope consoled her great mind, even though she was distressed.

Despite being seized by Hades, Persephone retained hope "as long as she could still see the earth and starry sky," that is, the familiar upper world she – and an initiate before arriving in Hades – lives in. So our phrase "I am a child of earth and starry sky" need mean no more than "I come from the world above" and, if it does mean that, there is no inconsistency or oddity whatever about adding, with a "but," the claim of heavenly descent. There is, perhaps, a useful warning here against what one might call "leaping to conceptions," that is pressing urgently on past *poetically* precise imagery to get at the kind of *conceptual* precision many scholars expect and seek in these texts. Here as in some other respects interpretation of the tablets has perhaps been too insistently intellectualizing, or systematically Orphicizing, whereas it is precisely their combination of the esoteric with the familiar that gives the tablets their distinctive character.[9]

Descent from the Pure?

I turn now to another formula of introduction, and to three fourth-century BCE texts from the same tumulus in Thurii in South Italy. First, L9 (= *OF* 488 = 5 GJ):

> ἔρχομαι ἐκ κοθαρῶ⟨ν⟩ κοθαρά, χθονί⟨ων⟩ βασίλεια,
> Εὐκλῆς, Εὐβο⟨υ⟩λεύς τε καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι·

9 There has been much debate over the significance in Orphic terms of the initiate's claim of descent from Earth and Sky, see e.g. Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 40–44.

καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὑμῶν γένος ὄλβιον εὔχομαι εἶμεν.
ἀλ⟨λ⟩ά με Μο⟨ῖ⟩ρα ἐδάμασ⟨σ⟩ε {καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι} καὶ ἀσ{σ}τεροβλῆτα κεραυνῶι.
κύκλο⟨υ⟩ δ' ἐξέπταν βαρυπενθέος ἀργαλέοιο,
ἱμερτο⟨ῦ⟩ δ' ἐπέβαν στεφάνο⟨υ⟩ ποσὶ καρπαλίμοισι,
Δεσ{σ}ποίνας δὲ ὑπὸ κόλπον ἔδυν χθονίας βασιλείας·
{ἱμερτο⟨ῦ⟩ δ' ἀπέβαν στεφάνο⟨υ⟩ ποσὶ καρπαλίμοισι.}
'ὄλβιε καὶ μακαριστέ, θεὸς δ' ἔσηι ἀντὶ βροτοῖο'.
ἔριφος ἐς γάλ' ἔπετον.

1 ita dist. Bücheler, edd. recc. : ἔρχομαι ἐκ κοθαρῶ⟨ν⟩, κοθαρά χθονί⟨ων⟩ βασίλεια Otto Hoffmann, *Sammlung der griechischen Dialekt-Inschriften* II.2 (1890) 1654, Murray
4 κεραυνῶι Zuntz : κεραυνόν lam.

I come, from pure forebears pure(*-feminine*), Queen of the chthonians [*viz* 'Underworld divinities' or 'inhabitants of the Underworld'], Eukles, and Eubouleus and you other immortal gods. For I too claim to be of your fortunate line of descent. But Fate overcame me, and the lightning-hurler with his thunderbolt. (*5*) I flew out of the circle of grievous, heavy woe, I advanced to the desired crown with swift feet, I got into the bosom of the Mistress, Underworld queen. "Fortunate and most blessed man, a god you will be instead of a mortal." I fell, a kid, into milk.

A second text from the same tumulus, L10A (= *OF* 489 = 7 GJ), adds one line (4), omits others, and has a different conclusion:

ἔρχομα⟨ι⟩ ἐ⟨κ⟩ κα⟨θα⟩ρῶν {σχονων} καθαρά, χ⟨θ⟩ονίων βασίλ{η}ει⟨α⟩,
Εὖκλε καὶ Εὐβουλεῦ {ι} καὶ †θεοὶ δαίμονε⟨ς⟩ ἄλλοι·
καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὑμῶν γένο⟨ς⟩ εὔχομαι ὄλβιον εἶναι,
πο⟨ι⟩νὰν δ' ἀνταπέ{ι}τε{σε}ι⟨σ⟩' ἔργων ἕνεκα οὔτι δικα⟨ί⟩ων.
εἴτε με Μο⟨ῖ⟩ρα ἐδαμάσ⟨σ⟩' {ατο} εἴτε ἀστεροπῆτα κ⟨ε⟩ραυνῶι.
νῦν δ' ἱκέτη⟨ς⟩ ἥκω πα⟨ρα⟩ὶ ἁγνὴ⟨ν⟩ Φε⟨ρ⟩σεφόνε⟨ι⟩αν,
ὥς με{ι} πρόφ⟨ρ⟩ω⟨ν⟩ πέμψη⟨ι⟩ ἕδρας ἐς εὐαγέ{ι}ων.

6 ἱκέτη⟨ς⟩ ἥκω Olivieri : ἱκέτι⟨ς⟩ ἥκω Kern et edd. recc. : ικετιικω lam., cf. L5F.3, Γᾶς υἱός ιμι (pro ἠμι)

I come, from pure forebears pure(*-feminine*), Queen of the chthonians, Eukles, and Eubouleus and †other gods immortals†. For I too claim to be of your fortunate line of descent, and I paid in recompense the penalty

> because of deeds not just. (5) Either Fate overcame me or the lightning-blaster with his thunderbolt. Now I come as a suppliant to pure Persephone, that she in her graciousness may send me to the seats of the pure.

I focus on the opening line of these two texts, which is also that of the third leaf from the tumulus, L10B (= *OF* 490 = 6 GJ), and – with the variant ἔρχεται – of a much later text from mid-second- to third-century CE Rome, L11 (= *OF* 491 = 9 GJ). On what is now its established punctuation – ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν καθαρά, χθονίων βασίλεια – the line means "I come, being pure and descended from pure forebears, (O) Queen of the chthonians." The idiom "having such-and-such quality + ἐκ = 'and descended from' + (genitive case) people with the same quality" is a well-established way of expressing someone's possession by inheritance of the specified quality – but this is, I think, a false articulation and punctuation. The comma should be after καθαρῶν rather than καθαρά, so that καθαρά goes with the following address to Persephone: "I come from among the pure, pure Queen of the chthonians," ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν, καθαρὰ χθονίων βασίλεια. This is the fussy detail I mentioned, but, even apart from the importance of getting the details right, interesting questions about gender in the tablets and about how the initiate conceives him or herself in the process of transition to Hades – what state he or she will be in during that process – are raised by, or even depend on, this textual decision.

The Scholarly Debate

Gilbert Murray seems to me to have got this matter right, but without marshalling adequate arguments, in the "Critical Appendix on the Orphic Tablets" he contributed in 1903 to Jane Ellen Harrison's famous book *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*:

> I punctuate after καθαρῶν: "I come from the Pure, O Pure Queen," not "Pure I come from the Pure, O Queen." The rhythm of the line points strongly to this. Only by a definite system of punctuation, such as did not exist in ancient Greek, could you in such a sentence make a reader pause elsewhere than in the natural pause of the metre. The sense is: "I come from the Orphically-initiated, O Queen of the Orphically-initiated."[10]

10 Murray 1922, 667–68; by "natural pause" Murray means the 'main caesura' in the third foot.

Nowadays, however, everyone takes it for granted that Murray's interpretation of the line was decisively refuted by Günther Zuntz in his book *Persephone*. I quote Zuntz's central arguments:

> The verses are spoken to Persephone by the soul, ψυχή; hence the feminine gender in v. 1. [...]
>
> *V. 1* 'Out of the pure I come, pure Queen of them below':
>
> I could wish that this often-quoted rendering appeared here for the last time, never to be heard again. It reduces the noble and profound original to a platitudinous ditty and can serve, if anything, only to show how much harm can be done by a misplaced comma. The speaker does not set out to tell the goddess from where he has journeyed, addressing her with a most unsuitable adjective (for Persephone is ἁγνή indeed but not καθαρά); but he states with all possible emphasis that he himself is 'pure'. 'Here I stand before you', so the soul says, 'καθαρὰ ἐκ καθαρῶν'; the comma then has to be put after, and not before, καθαρά. According to Plato, the soul fit to see the ideas has similarly to be ἀγαθὴ καὶ ἐξ ἀγαθῶν and ἀρίστη καὶ ἐξ ἀρίστων [*Phaedr.* 246a ff., 249e, 274a]. The same mode of expression is frequent elsewhere, particularly in tragedy; e.g. Soph. *Phil.* 324 [*should be 384*] κακίστου κἀκ κακῶν, 874 εὐγενὴς κἀξ εὐγενῶν; Aristoph. *Ran.* 731 πονηροῖς κἀκ πονηρῶν. The connecting particle is not *de rigueur*: Soph. *Ant.* 471 ὠμὸν ἐξ ὠμοῦ πατρός; [Eur.] *Rhes.* 185 ἐξ ἀφθίτων ἄφθιτοι, 388 ἐσθλὸς ἐσθλοῦ παῖς; Theognis 185 κακὴν κακοῦ; Andokides, *De Myst.* 109 ἀγαθοὶ ἐξ ἀγαθῶν. Basically this type of expression enhances the qualities indicated by describing them as inherited; even so, it is not, perhaps, necessary to assume – though it is possible – that those buried with these lamellae belonged to family-cult communities. At any rate they called themselves καθαροί, and their expectation of Persephone's favour centred on their consciousness of being 'pure'.[11]

Zuntz, who restates and extends arguments made long before by Erwin Rohde,[12] has completely convinced subsequent scholars and editors, who tend

11 Zuntz 1971, 306–7. Note Zuntz's evasiveness about how (and from whom) the purity is "inherited"; more on this below.

12 Rohde 1898, 2.217–18, esp. 217, n. 3: "Das Femininum: ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν καθαρά – und (2, v. 6) νῦν δ' ἱκέτις – freilich metrisch unmöglich – ἥκω bezieht sich wohl auf die ψυχή, nicht auf das Geschlecht des Todten, so dass dreimal eine Frau redete. Auch redet ja 1, 9 Persephone wie zu einem Manne: ὄλβιε καὶ μακαριστέ, θεὸς δ' ἔσῃ ἀντὶ βροτοῖο." Rohde (218, n. 1) translates "Rein von Reinen geboren," and claims (218, n. 3) "καθαροί heissen die Eltern, καθαρά die Seele des Todten selbst."

simply to cite his discussion; Edmonds, for example, says that "Zuntz cites a barrage of parallels to prove that the two words must go together to describe the deceased as not only pure personally but from pure lineage."[13] In recent decades, so far as I am aware, only Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli has dissented from Zuntz's view, but the brief note in his edition seems to have persuaded no one.[14]

The view of Rohde and Zuntz that καθαρά is feminine because it agrees with the unexpressed noun ψυχή is still commonly accepted; Graf and Johnston, for example, repeatedly refer to "the soul of the initiate" or "the soul" arriving and going on its path in the Underworld and also speak of the "disembodied soul."[15] Others prefer the view of Kotansky, who notes that ψυχή occurs only rarely in the tablets and concludes that καθαρά "perhaps signals texts designed or specifically written for *women* devotees."[16] Rohde had rejected this notion on the basis of the phrase in L9.9, ὄλβιε καὶ μακαριστέ: masculine forms of the vocative, so that, as Rohde says, "Persephone speaks as to a man."[17] Kotansky however claims that "It should not matter if occasional male-gender vocabulary and verbal forms have crept incongruously into the texts […] after all Classical Greece was largely a male-dominated society. […] Clearly a need to specify a female devotee required the unusual change."[18] We shall return to this point shortly, noting here that Kotansky speaks on the one hand of male forms creeping in incongruously and on the other hand of specification of a female as an unusual change, so that he is not clear whether it is masculine forms or feminine forms that are unusual and incongruous. At any rate, these are the alternatives if one accepts the Rohde/Zuntz argument that καθαρά goes with the words that precede it: either καθαρά agrees with the unexpressed noun ψυχή, or it is used because this is the tablet of a deceased woman.

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13 Edmonds 2004, 65–66, n. 99.

14 Pugliese Carratelli 2001, 104 = 2003, 107 argues that the agreement of καθαρά with βασίλεια "è evidente per il fatto che l'aggettivo è costantemente al femminile," but this is not decisive in itself, and he ignores the question of agreement with an understood ψυχή. He also suggests that applying καθαρά to Persephone recalls how the initiation ritual "ha creato un grado di affinità tra il *mystes* e la sovrana del mondo dei morti" – a sound point (see further below).

15 Graf and Johnston 2013, 99–100 and 186.

16 Kotansky 1994, 109.

17 Rohde 1898, 217, n. 3.

18 Kotansky 1994, 109–10.

Another generally accepted argument for construing καθαρά with the subject of the verb ἔρχομαι – whether that subject is the ψυχή or a deceased female initiate – is Zuntz's notion that καθαρά is "a most unsuitable adjective" to be addressed to Persephone. Kotansky likewise claims that "καθαρά is appropriate in describing a person who has undergone ritual purification, not of a goddess, who would be described as ἁγνή or ἅγια – that is, one whose 'holiness' would have remained constant."[19]

Only one aspect of this general line of interpretation has prompted some slight misgiving in recent editors and commentators. Edmonds says:

> The claim [...] to come from the pure, ἐκ καθαρῶν, seems most likely to refer not to the actual parentage of the deceased but to her ritual predecessors; i.e., rather than claiming that she was born of parents who are also pure, the deceased is claiming that she has been made pure by those who are themselves pure. The ritual genealogy thus replaces the polis-centred family lines as the efficacy of the purification becomes more important for determining one's place in the cosmos than the ordinary distinctions of gender, family, clan, or polis.[20]

Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal remark similarly that "The use of the syntagma 'pure among the pure' implies that the speaker defines himself/herself as belonging to a group characterized by solidarity and the maintenance of a similar ritual situation."[21] Zuntz himself had said "it is not, perhaps, necessary to assume – though it is possible – that those buried with these lamellae belonged to family-cult communities."[22] These observations, saying or implying that the group of καθαροί, "pure people" that is referred to should be the initiate's ritual group rather than, as Rohde assumed,[23] his or her parents, seem to me thoroughly sound, but so far as I can see there is no basis for the notion that the "such-and-such ἐκ the such-and-such" idiom can express a relationship other than that of child and parents/ancestors or a process other than genealogical inheritance. This then is really an argument for preferring the simple "starting-point" idiom of ἐκ plus the genitive

19 Kotansky 1994, 109.

20 Edmonds 2004, 70; the *ad hoc* notion of "ritual genealogy" does not solve the linguistic problem.

21 Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 101.

22 Zuntz 1971, 307.

23 Rohde 1898, 218, n. 3.

case with a verb of motion ("I have come from among the pure") to the "inheritance" idiom all these scholars assume.

Gender in the Tablets

Further arguments against Zuntz's articulation and interpretation follow from the fact that masculine rather than feminine forms very clearly predominate in the tablets. I classify the relevant forms here:

> ***Feminine***: Καικιλία [...] νόμωι ἴθι δῖα γεγῶσα (L11.4). ***Feminine substituted for masculine***: δίψηι δ' εἰμὶ αὔη (L3.8, for δίψαι δ' ἠμ' αὖος); γᾶς ἠμι θυγάτηρ (L5D.3, for γᾶς υἱός ἠμι). ***Masculine***: δίψαι δ' ἠμ' αὖος (L1.11, L4.9, L5A-B-C-E-F.1, L6.1 and L6A.1), even in the daughter-version of type 5 (L5D.1); γᾶς υἱός ἠμι (L5A-B-C-E-F and L6 [γῆς παῖς εἰμι in L1, L3]); πιὼν (L1.15); πεφυλαγμένον and παθὼν (L8.2–3); also in three texts with *καθαρά* in the first line: ὄλβιε καὶ μακαριστέ (L9.9), ἱκέτης ἥκω (L10A.6 [*not* fem. ἱκέτις, which is unmetrical: see n. 25 below], L10B.6). ***Woman's grave but masculine forms***: L1.

In L11 – by far our latest text, from Rome of the later 2nd or 3rd century CE, and the only verse tablet that includes the deceased's name – there are feminine forms which are apparently 'free composition' (as opposed to the stereotyped phraseology of most of the texts): Καικιλία Σεκουνδεῖνα, νόμωι ἴθι δῖα γεγῶσα, "Caecilia Secundina, come rightfully, having become(*-feminine*) divine(*-feminine*)" (L11.4). In earlier texts, we twice find feminine forms that have clearly been substituted for masculine. At L3.8, δίψηι δ' εἰμὶ αὔη, "I am parched(*-feminine*) with thirst," the feminine form of the adjective replaces the masculine, αὖος, which occurs four times elsewhere. One of those four occurrences, L5D.1, is in a text adapted in the third line to suit a woman, our second example of a feminine form substituted for a masculine: L5D.3, γᾶς ἠμι θυ⟨γ⟩ạ́τηρ, "I am a daughter of earth" for γᾶς υἱός ἠμι, "I am a son of earth" in the parallel texts from Eleutherna.[24] Otherwise masculine forms predominate and are clearly normal: δίψα⟨ι⟩ δ' ἠμ' αὖος, "I am parched(*-masculine*) with thirst" even in the daughter-version of text-type L5 (L5D.1) as in L1.10, L5A.1, L6.1; the masculine participles πιὼν, "having drunk" in L1.15 and πεφυλαγμένον, "keeping an eye on" and παθὼν, "having experienced" in L8.2–3; and masculine forms also in two of the tablets

24 Cf. γῆς παῖς εἰμι, "I am a child (*-masculine or feminine*) of earth" in texts L1 and L3.

with an alleged "pure" soul or female deceased in the first line: ὄλβιε καὶ μακαριστέ, "fortunate(-*masculine*) and most blessed(-*masculine*) one" in L9.9, and ἱκέτη⟨ς⟩ ἥκω, "I arrive as a suppliant(-*masculine*)" in L10 A.6.[25] The Hipponion tablet, found in the grave of a woman, has consistently masculine forms, including "son of earth and starry sky" (L1.11, 15).

Edmonds claims that "the use of masculine forms in the Pelinna[26] and Hipponion tablets [...] demonstrates that the unmarked masculine was in fact used to refer to women,"[27] but this is mistaken, a false application of the concept of markedness. In Greek (as in English) one cannot use masculine singular forms when referring exclusively to a particular woman. In a polite, 'self-effacing' idiom, women can speak of themselves in the first-person plural with masculine plural forms, and masculine forms are used in generalizing statements whose reference is not limited to women, but neither of these is the linguistic situation here.[28] The obvious explanation is rather that leaves were not invariably (or even usually) inscribed with reference to a particular deceased, so that a tablet linguistically suited to a male might be acquired or put to use by a woman's family – as L1 certainly was – for burial with her. The standard of literacy of the tablets, and so presumably of most of their users, is very low, and even a tablet that was adapted for a woman can be imperfectly adapted (L5D).

Given the clear predominance of masculine forms on the tablets, then, we can safely conclude that it would be a spectacular anomaly for the feminine form καθαρά, if it referred to the gender of a deceased female initiate, to occur on a total of four tablets, that is on every tablet we have that uses this formulaic phrase, while the masculine equivalent, καθαρός, which would also work metrically, never occurs at all. On my view, by contrast, it is perfectly obvious why we invariably get the feminine καθαρά: because it agrees with βασίλεια.

25 *Not* the feminine ἱκέτι⟨ς⟩ ἥκω of Kern and all recent editors, which (as Rohde noted) is unmetrical; the scribe has merely written iota for the sound of eta, here as elsewhere, e.g. the very next word on the lamella is ἥκω written as ικω, cf. L5F.3 γᾶς υἱός ιμι for ἠμι.

26 This must be based either (by a slip) on the indifferently masculine/feminine compound adjective τρισόλβιε in both L7A.1 and L7B.1 or on the dubious reading τελέσας ἅπερ in L7A.7, which even if it were right could equally well be articulated as feminine τελέσασ' ἅπερ. Thus no conclusion can be drawn about the relationship of gender in the text with the gender of the woman it was buried with.

27 Edmonds 2004, 66, n. 101.

28 The most reliable statements of the relevant linguistic principles are Gottfried Hermann in Vigerus 1822, 715 and Barrett 1964, 366–68 on Euripides, *Hippolytos* 1102–50; cf. Moorhouse 1982, 8–10 on the 'self-effacing' first-person-plural idiom.

Disembodied Souls?

But what of the other possibility, that the feminine form καθαρά refers not to the gender of the deceased initiate but to the grammatical gender of the unexpressed noun ψυχή, to the "soul" of any deceased person? I note first that Kotansky is right that the word ψυχή is very rare on the tablets. It occurs only twice, once in the first line of L8 (= *OF* 487 = 3 GJ [Thurii, S. Italy, 4th c. BCE]) in the phrase ἀλλ' ὁπόταμ ψυχὴ προλίπηι φάος ἀελίοιο, "but as soon as the soul leaves the light of the sun," a hexametrical formula whose closest congener is τῶν δέ θ' ὁμοῦ ψυχὴ λείπει φάος ἠελίοιο, "and together their [the nymphs'] souls leave the light of the sun" at *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (5) verse 272. This poetic idiom simply means "die," and though one could press it into yielding a concept of the initiate's state after death one certainly does not have to do so. Another hexametrical formula in the tablets seems to me to provide good ground for not doing so – the formula in L3 and L6 we have already discussed, "I am a child of earth and starry sky," which makes no abstruse theological claim but simply means "I am someone from the upper world."

The only other mention of souls in the tablets is the reference we encountered in L1.4 to the souls of the dead who "descend and refresh themselves" at the first spring by the cypress tree on the right, the spring that our initiate should not go anywhere near. The usual and surely justified assumption is that whereas our initiates, by drinking water flowing from the lake of Memory, will retain their personal identity for their blissful life in the Underworld, those who drink from the other spring must be drinking the water of Forgetfulness or Oblivion which in Plato and elsewhere wipes the identity clean as a preliminary to reincarnation in the upper world.[29] Thus the souls of the dead who refresh themselves are the round-trip travellers to Hades I said we would catch a glimpse of, souls in process of reincarnation and so a distinct group from our initiates. The phrase in L1.4, ἔνθα κατερχόμεναι ψυχαὶ νεκύων ψύχονται, "there souls of the dead descend and refresh themselves," implies that our initiates do not think of themselves as becoming 'souls of the dead', certainly not ordinary souls of the dead, and would not call themselves that. If anyone objects that all Greeks think of themselves – however vaguely – as 'souls' when they die, my reply is that we cannot be certain of this. It is not how the chorus of initiates in Aristophanes' *Frogs* think or speak of themselves, and among the initiates who used the gold leaves some think of themselves in relatively restrained terms as *mystai* and *bakchoi* (L1.16) or as *olbioi*, "blessed or fortunate ones," but the

29 See e.g. Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 29–35; Graf and Johnston 2013, 116–20.

claim to be of divine origin is very common and some texts speak of an initiate becoming a hero (L2.2, L3.11) or a god, as in L8.4, "a god you have become from a man," L9.9, "a god you will be instead of a mortal," and L11.4, where Caecilia Secundina is told "come rightfully, having become divine." One thing we *can* be certain of is that Greeks normally conceive and envisage their gods not as disembodied souls or spirits but in the most vivid and concrete way as physical beings.

Is it possible then that the initiates whose tablets we are reading did not conceive themselves as becoming 'souls' in the sense of disembodied wraiths of some kind, but as passing in a version of their mortal physical form to the immortal physical form in which they will enjoy forever all the banqueting, dancing and other very corporeal pleasures they envisage in their post-mortal existence? Or, in other words, that they were happy with a conceptually vague but emotionally and imaginatively satisfying notion of the process of becoming a blissful inhabitant of the Underworld or a hero or god? Well, I raise the question. Graf and others have emphasized in connection with these texts that we must attempt to fit our evidence for particular phenomena into relevant wider contexts – in this case, what we can reconstruct of Orphic thought[30] – and this is of course true, but it is equally true that we should be prepared for the detailed evidence to reveal or suggest conceptual inconsistencies or imperfect matches between theory and practice, between aspiration to systematic conceptual constructs and contentment with functional popular notions.

I conclude then that there is no positive evidence – certainly no internal evidence in the tablets – for the notion that our initiates conceived of or referred to themselves as 'souls', and that there is some counter-evidence. Of course we cannot conclude with certainty that they did not conceive themselves in that way, but if we are tempted on that basis to understand καθαρά in our passages as agreeing with the unexpressed noun ψυχή there are further considerations that ought to restrain us from doing so. If that were the correct articulation of the passage then various unlikely – and cumulatively incredible – consequences would follow. We would have to accept that this reference to the initiate's soul as a periphrasis for the initiate him- or herself

30 Graf in Graf and Johnston 2013, 193: "The deeper methodological question is whether scholars prefer to work with reconstructed contexts to explain the findings, or whether they feel comfortable with 'a heap of broken images.' Conscientious reconstruction in order to find an explanatory context for data is, in our view, a fundamental task of historical scholarship when confronted with fragments; to refuse this task runs the risk of reducing history to antiquarian data collection."

is almost confined to this one formula, and in fact is *invariably* used here but either never or only – and very inconsistently – twice elsewhere in the tablets. That being so, it becomes very difficult to see how or why this usage could, in this one isolated phrase, be understood rather than expressed; one can only 'understand' or 'supply' what can be obviously and readily understood or supplied, but in fact the tablets elsewhere speak of initiates not periphrastically as souls but simply as people, men and women. Unless, that is, one wants to suggest that there are two minor exceptions to this, that in the two early passages with feminine forms we have isolated cases of a *soul* "parched" with thirst and a *soul* as "daughter" rather than "son" of earth and starry sky, as though the scribes here very exceptionally remembered to do the 'soul-periphrasis thing' that they always do in our one line but almost invariably forget to do elsewhere. Surely all this is incredible? Is it not obvious that the two latter changes of gender are adaptations to the physical gender of the initiate, not to the grammatical gender of the noun ψυχή, and that the reason καθαρά is always feminine in our line is not that the scribes always remember to employ the periphrasis in this one place, but because it agrees with βασίλεια? In the end, then, no matter whether one takes καθαρά of the initiate's post-mortem soul or of her gender, the Rohde/Zuntz articulation seems to me unsustainable.

I would also – as a subordinate point – endorse Murray's argument that, in an age lacking punctuation as an aid in the articulation of sentences, no competent composer of Greek hexameters would place after the natural pause of the main caesura a grammatically ambiguous form that was meant to be taken with the words preceding the caesura rather than those following it. I note too that in the 'descent' idiom which Zuntz wants to detect the word order ἐκ καθαρῶν καθαρά would be far less usual than (the metrically impossible) καθαρὰ ἐκ καθαρῶν which Zuntz himself uses to paraphrase the text.[31] Hence the baffling effect of placing the grammatically ambiguous word on the wrong side of the caesura would be compounded by having to take the collocation ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν – the standard metrical unit of a first-colon hemiepes – not in the natural and immediately obvious 'starting-point' sense of a verb of motion + ἐκ, "I am come from among the pure," but rather as a first installment, in non-standard word order, of a different idiom, "I am come as one pure and descended from the pure." How a reader of this verse could be expected to sort out that καθαρά should not be taken with βασίλεια is therefore beyond me. One can however argue that the composer of these verses was *not* competent,

31 Zuntz 1971, 306.

and these last considerations are therefore not in themselves decisive, but they cohere with the primary arguments against Zuntz's interpretation and, other things being equal, it is more prudent to assume that the composer did not produce a hopelessly awkward and baffling verse than that he did.

Polyptoton in Prayer

There are also a number of positive arguments for preferring the articulation and sense "I come from among the pure, pure Queen of those below." Consider Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women* 144–50, where the chorus of young women, threatened with unwelcome marriages, pray to Artemis to save them: θέλουσα δ' αὖ θέλουσαν ἁγνά μ' ἐπιδέτω Διὸς κόρα [...] ἀδμῆτος ἀδμήτα ῥύσιος γενέσθω, "may the pure daughter of Zeus look benevolent on benevolent me [...] and may unmarried she be the saviour of unmarried me." Here we have two examples in close proximity of a favourite Greek rhetorical device, 'polyptoton': the use of the same word twice or more in different cases or inflectional forms.[32] This figure is used in various ways, the present type being an example of what Brigitte Gygli-Wyss in her standard account calls "polyptota in prayer," "Polyptota im Gebet." "In these examples," she says, "the one praying establishes, with the help of polyptoton, an interrelation between the divinity and him or herself: because Artemis is also a maiden she must help the maiden daughters of Danaos, and so on."[33] Detlev Fehling has a less helpful discussion in his book on figures of repetition in Greek, but does usefully note that when polyptoton is employed there is "a clear tendency to place the repeated words immediately beside one another."[34]

Our verse in the tablets is surely another example of this kind of polyptoton. Emphasis on a mutual connection or bond between someone addressing a divinity and the divine addressee, especially when something is being sought from the divinity, is a standard component of Greek hymns and prayers, and is

32 'Polyptoton' strictly refers to variation of case in nominals (πτῶσις = 'case'), but a wider sense referring to repetition of any kind of word in different inflectional forms is well-established and convenient: see e.g. Gygli-Wyss 1966, 13–16; Lausberg 1998, 288–92.

33 Gygli-Wyss 1966, 78–80: "In diesen Beispielen stellt der Betende jedesmal mit Hilfe des Polyptotons eine Beziehung zwischen der Gottheit und sich selbst her: weil Artemis auch ein Mädchen ist, muß sie den Danaidenmädchen helfen, usw." (80).

34 Fehling 1969, 227 §§ (6a), (6b) – to which, rather than to his category (6d), where he quotes it, our formula from the gold leaves seems to me to belong; "eine deutliche Tendenz, die wiederholten Wörter unmittelbar nebeneinanderzustellen," (232).

not merely a rhetorical device but a concept central to the Greek idea of reciprocity with the divine.[35]

An example of the concept without the polyptoton is a passage from Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* (96–100) in which Oedipus arrives as a suppliant at the grove of the Eumenides in Athens and addresses them:

> ἔγνωκα μέν νυν ὥς με τήνδε τὴν ὁδὸν
> οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅπως οὐ πιστὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν πτερὸν
> ἐξήγαγ' ἐς τόδ' ἄλσος. οὐ γὰρ ἄν ποτε
> πρώταισιν ὑμῖν ἀντέκυρσ' ὁδοιπορῶν,
> νήφων ἀοίνοις [...]

> Now I know that on this journey it cannot have been otherwise than that some reliable omen from you led me right to this grove, for never otherwise would I have encountered you first of all in my travel, I coming without wine to you who are wineless [...]

Albert Henrichs demonstrated that the phrase νήφων ἀοίνοις, "sober to wineless ones,"[36] expresses how Oedipus approaches in the proper ritual way, without wine, divinities who receive only wineless offerings. He describes Sophocles' phrase as "in effect, a conceptual, rather than verbal, polyptoton,"[37] and notes that νήφων is here "a variation of the more technical term νηφάλιος" which Kallimachos (fr. 681) applies to Athenian priestesses, the νηφάλιαι or 'sober' Hesychidai, who sacrifice honey-cakes to the Eumenides.[38]

I suggest that in the same way, in our passage, the adjective καθαρά, 'pure' is applied to Persephone as a variant of the more technical term καθάρσιος, 'purifying' in order that καθαρά can combine in polyptoton with καθαρῶν, another form of the same adjective καθαρός, which is applicable to initiates as καθάρσιος is not. The standard lexicon is very probably right, however, that καθαρός can itself mean 'purifying' or 'cleansing' (*LSJ* sense 3.c), as in Pindar's *Olympian* 1.26, ἐπεί νιν καθαροῦ λέβητος ἔξελε Κλωθώ, "after Klotho pulled him

35 See e.g. Furley and Bremer 2001, 1.61–63, whose examples from Greek hymns of 'reciprocal' application of the verb χαίρειν to both worshipper and divinity are further instances of polyptoton in a religious context. Pugliese Carratelli, without using the term 'polyptoton' or citing parallels, also saw that Murray's articulation creates an "affinità" between initiate and Persephone, see n. 14 above.

36 Henrichs 1983, 100.

37 Henrichs 1983, 88.

38 Henrichs 1983, 91.

[Pelops] from the purifying cauldron" and Theokritos 24.96,[39] where Teiresias says καθαρῷ δὲ πυρώσατε δῶμα θεείῳ, "fumigate the house with purifying sulfur" after the snakes Herakles killed have been burnt and their ashes cast out.

'Pure' Divinities

In any case, the contention of Zuntz and Kotansky that καθαρά cannot refer to Persephone, who would be described rather as ἁγνή or ἅγια, reflects general practice but simply does not hold as an absolute rule. Not only is καθαρός a likely variant for καθάρσιος, there is positive evidence of καθαρός being applied to gods. In a purportedly Delphic epigram it seems likely, despite textual uncertainties, that Apollo is described as the καθαρὸς δαίμων, 'pure/purifying divinity' of the sanctuary:

> ἁγνὸς πρὸς τέμενος καθαροῦ, ξένε, δαίμονος ἔρχου
> ψυχὴν νυμφαίου νάματος ἁψάμενος· [...]
> ἁγνὸς codd. : ἁγνῆς Wilamowitz πρὸς Schneidewin : εἰς codd.
> καθαροῦ Jacobs : καθαρός codd. : καθαρόν cod. B

> Come, stranger, pure in soul, to the sanctuary of the pure god, having dipped your hand in the water of the Nymphs.[40]

"Come pure in soul to the sanctuary of the pure god" is another example of Henrichs's "conceptual polyptoton." Καὶ καθαρῇ συνάεθλος ὁμίλεεν Ἰοχεαίρῃ, "and she shared the tasks of the pure Archeress [Artemis]"[41] is one of many examples in Nonnos' late epic of καθαρός applied to a divinity, here very appropriately 'pure' Artemis but elsewhere Athena (36.249, 48.411) and others.

The best evidence however is Pausanias 8.44.5–6, who describes a sanctuary in Pallantion in Arcadia of gods whose epithet is οἱ Καθαροί, 'The Pure Ones':

> λείπεται δὲ καὶ ἐς ἡμᾶς ἔτι ἐπὶ κορυφῇ τοῦ λόφου θεῶν ἱερόν. ἐπίκλησις μὲν δή ἐστιν αὐτοῖς Καθαροί, περὶ μεγίστων δὲ αὐτόθι καθεστήκασιν οἱ ὅρκοι· καὶ ὀνόματα μὲν τῶν θεῶν οὐκ ἴσασιν ἢ καὶ εἰδότες οὐ θέλουσιν ἐξαγορεύειν, Καθαροὺς δὲ ἐπὶ τοιῷδε ἄν τις κληθῆναι τεκμαίροιτο, ὅτι αὐτοῖς οὐ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὁ Πάλλας ἔθυσε καθὰ καὶ ὁ πατήρ οἱ τῷ Λυκαίῳ Διί.

39 With Dover 1971, 259 ad loc.

40 *Anthologia Palatina* 14.71.1–2.

41 Nonnos, *Dionysiaka* 15.179.

> There remains still in our time on the crest of the hill a sanctuary of gods. The epithet given to them is *Katharoi* ('Pure'), and it is established that oaths concerning the weightiest matters are sworn here. The names of the gods they do not know, or know but are not willing to divulge, but one might conjecture that they were called *Katharoi* for this reason, that Pallas did not sacrifice to them in the same [grisly] manner as his father did to Lycaean Zeus.

Zuntz in fact notices this passage of Pausanias in a footnote, but says that "the analogy is suggestive indeed but not immediately applicable," and concludes that there is not, as he puts it, "any true parallel" for the application of καθαρά to Persephone in our passage.[42] This seems to me wilful evasion of clear counter-evidence, and Zuntz is apparently unaware of polyptoton as a figure of religious language – with the result that he can regard an instance of this powerful device as producing a "platitudinous ditty" – and unaware too of the other evidence I have cited. What Zuntz regards as a platitude is not only an effective rhetorical device but one that suits precisely these texts and this situation. The initiate goes on in the third verse of L9, L10A, and L10B to say, "For I too claim to be of your fortunate line of descent," a key claim which the polyptoton expressing mutuality between initiate and god anticipates.[43] Admission to the realm of the blessed is at stake, and emphatic invocation and reinforcement of common bonds with the Underworld powers is called for if Persephone is to be "gracious" and admit her "suppliant" (as L10A has it).

I add a final observation about the way L10A was inscribed: ἔρχομα⟨ι⟩ ἐ⟨κ⟩ κα⟨θα⟩ρῶν {σχονων} καθαρὰ χ⟨θ⟩ονίων βασίλ{η}ει⟨α⟩. The letters σχονων must represent the word the scribe spells χονίων, and this could suggest that he took καθαρά with what follows. He begins the second clause before writing the word καθαρά, and indeed the line would be metrically sound in the form ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν, χθονίων καθαρὰ βασίλεια but is preferable stylistically with the words in polyptoton side-by-side.[44] It is, however, equally possible that eyeskip from one form of καθαρός to the other is behind the position of σχονων.

42 Zuntz 1971, 307, n. 6.

43 L9 l. 3, καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὑμῶν γένος ὄλβιον εὔχομαι εἶμεν. L10A and L10B have the variant γένος εὔχομαι ὄλβιον εἶναι.

44 See Fehling 1969, 232 (quoted n. 34 above).

Conclusions

It is time to set aside Zuntz's rather arbitrary assertions and restore the reading for which a variety of strong and mutually supportive arguments can be made. By doing so we not only correct the text of an important verse in four of the gold leaves but also reveal a striking new epithet of Persephone and a further instance of polyptoton expressing a bond between worshipper and divinity. Our reconsideration of the passage also points to the conclusion that initiates conceive themselves arriving in Hades not as disembodied souls but simply – with satisfying vagueness – as post-mortal versions of themselves. Like our reinterpretation of the phrase "I am a child of earth and starry heaven," this suggests that the language of the gold leaves is not so suffused with precise theological concepts as is often supposed. Perhaps these observations support the view that the gold leaves are broadly rather than strictly Orphic, but at any rate they remind us that many questions about these fascinating texts – including some of the big questions – remain very much open.

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CHAPTER 6

Pathein and *Mathein* in the Descents to Hades

Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui

A Unique Ordeal: Experiences and Doctrines in the Underworld

The complex relationship between emotional experience (*pathein*) and intellectual learning (*mathein*) is an early topos of Greek literature, fostered by a phonetic similarity providing easy material for effective word plays, one that was reconsidered in the debates about knowledge in Classical times: in such discussions, the importance of *pathein* (enduring) was emphasized in relation to *mathein* (learning) and vice-versa. The journey to the Underworld was a traditional motif in which, due to its ritual affiliations and to the authority of Hades as a source of revelation, these concerns were particularly exploited in different ways. Accounts of *katabasis*, which in all times have proved most susceptible to the incorporation of religious and ideological debates, were gradually loaded with explicit references to the unique ordeal of death and to the privileged knowledge of Hades, in ways which explicitly echo the conceptual tension between *pathos* and *mathos*. The multifarious depictions of the ordeal of death as an ineffable experience were combined in different ways with doctrines about this life and the next, whose source of revelation was precisely the world of the dead.

My analysis of the presence of such dichotomy in ritual and literary accounts of the descent to Hades will seek to illuminate the sense of several texts which can only be fully understood against the background of these important discussions. Furthermore, it will serve as a test case for the broader question of how religious discourse is related to emotional experience, which has recently been the focus of the so-called cognitive science of religion, particularly regarding the ancient Greek world.

We may take as point of departure the most explicit reference to the primacy of *pathos* upon entering Hades, surprisingly discounted by scholars. It is a gold tablet from Thurii, dated in the early fourth century BCE, which presents, as many other of the so-called Orphic leaves, some hexametric lines which address the initiate who has just died and arrived to Hades. The text of this tablet, though similar to others, is unique:[1]

1 *Orph. Fr.* 487 (I will refer to the gold tablets by their numeration in Bernabé's *Orphicorum Fragmenta* 2005). On the tablets, cf. Bernabé and Jiménez 2008; Edmonds 2011; Graf and

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Ἀλλ’ ὁπόταν ψυχὴ προλίπηι φάος ἀελίοιο,
δεξιὸν †Ε.ΘΙΑΣ† δ’ ἐξι‹έ›ναι πεφυλαγμένον εὖ μάλα πάντα·
χαῖρε παθὼν τὸ πάθημα τὸ δ’ οὔπω πρόσθ’{ε} ἐπεπόνθεις·
θεὸς ἐγένου ἐξ ἀνθρώπου· ἔριφος ἐς γάλα ἔπετες.
χαῖρ‹ε› χαῖρε· δεξιὰν ὁδοιπόρ‹ει›
λειμῶνάς θ’{ε} ἱεροὺς καὶ ἄλσεα Φερσεφονείας.

But when the soul forsakes the light of the sun,
take the right [...] each step with all due care.
Welcome! After an ordeal you have never been through before.
A god you are and mortal no longer. You are the kid that rushed to milk.
Welcome and rejoice! Take the path to the right,
the sacred meadows and groves of Phersephone.

The greeting of the third line of this tablet makes an etymological word play around the root of *pathein* which needs, in order to be kept, a somewhat clumsy literal translation: "hail, you having experienced the experience you had not experienced before." The insistence in repeating the same root (*pathōn, pathēma, epepontheis*) three times in the same line cannot be casual. Those who interpret the tablets to the Orphic background of the Zagreus myth, i. e. who think that the soul reaches salvation by declaring to have expiated the crime of the Titans, ancestors of mankind, against the child Dionysos, could think of relating this line to Dionysos' *pathē/pathēmata* (the words used by Herodotos, Plutarch and Pausanias when referring to the myth) or even to his mother Persephone's *penthos* (the term employed in a famous fragment of Pindar), as a way to link the death and rebirth of the initiate to that of Dionysos.[2] There may indeed be some resonance if the Zagreus myth was present in the mind of the initiates who used this tablet, but I do not intend to tread now on the classic (albeit still current) *querelle*

Johnston 2013; and Scullion's contribution in this volume (commented below in n. 39). None of them comments on l. 3 in relation to the *pathein/mathein* debate. Translation of the tablets here is (with some minor modifications) from Jenner 2014, who aims to render the poetic character of the lines.

2 Herodotos 2.171; Plutarch, *De esu carnium* 1.996bc; De *Iside et Osiride* 25.360d; *De E apud Delphos* 389a, *Defectu oraculorum* 415a; Pausanias 8.37.5; Dionysios of Halikarnassos, *Antiquitates Romanae* 2.19; Pindar, fr. 133 Snell-Maehler. Of course this link of the ordeal of the initiate to that of the suffering god invites the suspicion of Christianizing projection. Cf. Burkert 1987, 75–76.

between Orpheo-enthusiasts and Orpheo-sceptics, one of whose main battlefields is the interpretation of the tablets.[3]

Dionysos (not mentioned in this tablet) is probably in the background of this cult, but it is a typical mistaken prejudice of students of these texts to think of ancient audiences as so much influenced by editions of *Orphica* as the moderns are. In my opinion, such insistence on the root of *pathein* must have been primarily intended to underline the contested value of this term in the context of mystery cults and, even more broadly, in contemporary literary and philosophical discussions. This definition of death as an absolutely unique *pathos* indicates a voluntary self-positioning of the composer of this funerary/ritual hexameter in a heated debate about the value of intense emotional experience – to which we turn briefly.

The Coupling *Pathein/Mathein*

A summarized review of the association of *pathein* and *mathein* shows that it became topical by the fifth century BCE. In Homer and Hesiod suffering was related to knowledge in expressions of popular wisdom with a purely negative sense of *pathein*: the fact that man only learns after having suffered just shows human foolishness.[4] However, in Herodotos there is already a hint of a deeper sense. Croesus' final wisdom comes precisely from his previous sufferings, which thus lead to a somewhat positive outcome (1.207: τὰ δέ μοι παθήματα ἐόντα ἀχάριτα μαθήματα γέγονε). Aeschylus makes the chorus of the *Agamemnon* utter in the first stasimon two famous sentences: "to learn by suffering is made the supreme rule by Zeus" (176–77: τὸν πάθει μάθος θέντα κυρίως ἔχειν), and "Justice inclines her scales so that wisdom comes to those who suffer" (250–51: Δίκα δὲ τοῖς μὲν παθοῦσιν μαθεῖν ἐπιρρέπει).[5] Here the coupling

3 For the history of the century-long Orphic controversy, cf. Herrero de Jáuregui 2010, 1–32. In our days the most conspicuous representatives of these two sides are A. Bernabé and R. G. Edmonds, whose diverging interpretations of the Zagreus myth are explained, among other works, in Bernabé 2002 and Edmonds 2013.

4 E.g. Homer, *Iliad* 17.32, 20.198. Hesiod, *Works and Days* 219 (with the formula παθὼν δέ τε νήπιος ἔγνω). The evidence for the coupling *pathein/mathein* in Greek literature was collected and studied by Dörrie 1956, although he does not dwell on *katabasis*. The Thurii tablet and the Derveni Papyrus (cf. infra) were unknown to him.

5 Fränkel 1962 *ad loc* puts this passage in relation to Democritus' relating of knowledge to *ponoi* (fr. B 182 Diels-Kranz).

expresses a severe cosmic law for mankind: man is doomed to suffer and learns willy-nilly from that fact. Such learning has a depth of knowledge that cannot be attained otherwise, as many tragic heroes may attest. In effect, often the *metabolē* of the fortune of the tragic hero makes him understand finally, often too late: ἄρτι μανθάνω (just now I learn), says the widower Admetos lamenting his earlier choice;[6] Oedipus' wisdom at Colonus in the last tragedy of Sophocles is a consequence of his previous sufferings staged in *Oedipus the King*. The changing of the fortune in one day that Aristotle sees as essential to the tragic plot is a *pathos* from which *mathein* comes for the characters – and in an indirect way, to the spectators too.[7]

That the issue had become a popular matter of widespread discussion is perhaps best attested by its presence in Athenian comedy, for jokes need to be understood by the audience in order to be successful. A fragment of the writer of comedy Sotades (5th c. BCE) shows that for Athenian audience the coupling *pathein/mathein* was sufficiently well-known to be the matter of a sophisticated word play: if one is doomed to suffer anyway, why should one worry about learning, since all this learning will not avoid our suffering?

> εἰ μετὰ τὸ μαθεῖν
> οὐκ ἦν παθεῖν, ἃ δεῖ παθεῖν καλὸν μαθεῖν·
> εἰ με παθεῖν δεῖ, κἂν μάθω, τί δεῖ μαθεῖν;
> οὐ δεῖ μαθεῖν ἄρ' ἃ δεῖ παθεῖν· δεῖ γὰρ παθεῖν.

> If after learning came no suffering,
> to learn what we must suffer would be nice.
> But if I have to suffer even if I learn, why should I learn?
> There is no need to learn what we must suffer: for we must suffer.[8]

These lines convey the exact inverse of the traditional Archaic thought, i.e. that the fool learns by suffering, for the intelligent knows how to avoid it. Here it is the fool who labours in vain for a useless previous knowledge because suffering is in any case unavoidable. Sotades' character, whoever he may be, is sceptical about both *pathein* and *mathein* leading to any kind of valuable knowledge.

6 Euripides, *Alkestis* 940.

7 Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449a13; cf. 1452a32: "the best *anagnorisis* is that which takes place along the *peripeteia*, for example in *Oedipus*."

8 Sotades, fr. 4 Kassel-Austin (my translation), transmitted by a Christian work against astrology. These lines, whose context is lost, seem to refer to oracles or to the afterlife, both prominent topics in the texts examined here.

However, these lines also express a novel trend: if in Aeschylus' chorus *pathein* and *mathein* had been on the same side as complementary forms of attaining knowledge, the former leading to the latter, Sotades shows that both can be dissociated, for *pathein* will arrive anyway with or without any previous learning, and will not produce either any consequent *mathein*.

Inversely, in post-Socratic philosophy, this dissociation will take another turn, i.e. *pathos* will be seen as an uncontrollable passion that hinders proper learning and hence must be avoided. A clear example of such reasoning is furnished by Xenophon's *Cyropedia*: Tigranes, the son of the Armenian king, is trying to convince Cyrus to forgive his treacherous father, since, he argues, suffering and fear of death has acted upon his soul and changed it completely, from one day to another (ἐν τῇδε τῇ μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ ἐξ ἄφρονος σώφρων γεγένηται). This is contested by Cyrus with a more rational argument, i.e. that virtue is not an *affection* like sorrow, but a *learning* (πάθημα ἄρα τῆς ψυχῆς σὺ λέγεις εἶναι τὴν σωφροσύνην, ὥσπερ λύπην, οὐ μάθημα) that does not come suddenly but through intellectual training and practice.[9] This will be the dominant trend in all ancient philosophy from the fourth century onwards.

However, Tigranes' argument was thought by Xenophon worth opposing because it had some illustrious defendants, not only among hybristic tragic heroes who would learn the truth the hard way in the day of their *metabolē*, but also among some theoreticians. In Helen's *Encomium*, Gorgias says that one of the effects of poetry is to introduce in the listeners a sorrowful desire (πόθος φιλοπενθής) and to make the soul undergo a particular experience (ἴδιόν τι πάθημα διὰ τῶν λόγων ἔπαθεν ἡ ψυχή). Poetic words would have enchanted and taken power over Helen's soul making her act beyond any rational thought.[10] If such was the force of poetry upon the audience, the effect of enduring actual *pathēmata* through other means must have been considered equally powerful, if not more.

This privileging of *pathein* as a superior form of access to a higher level of thinking, acting, and living seems the stand taken by the composer of the aforementioned Thurian line, for whom enduring a unique *pathos* was the key to entrance in the divine realm. Whoever greets the deceased says that it is his unique ordeal (i.e. death) that makes him worth being welcomed, which clearly emphasizes a concept that was an identity-marker of the cult. That this is not overinterpreting an isolated line is supported by a famous, albeit

9 Xenophon, *Cyropedia* 3.1.17–18. According to Dörrie (1956, 30–31) this text would be directly referring to Gorgianic theories (cf. note 10). The relation may be looser if the debate was in the air.

10 Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen* 9.

fragmentary, sentence of Aristotle about the mysteries, in which *pathein* is clearly opposed to *mathein* and given neat precedence: "The initiates have not a lesson to learn, but an experience to undergo and a condition into which they must be brought, after having become fit" (τοὺς τελουμένους οὐ μαθεῖν τί δεῖν, ἀλλὰ παθεῖν καὶ διατεθῆναι, δηλονότι γενομένους ἐπιτηδείους).[11] It is probable, as some scholars have suggested, that Aristotle's original argumentation referred primarily to Eleusis, where the ineffable experiences come only after some training in previous initiations. Plato's use of Eleusinian imagery to depict philosophical knowledge culminating in contemplation also suggests such gradualism.[12] However, the conscious privileging of *pathein* over *mathein*, which applies to the mysteries the contemporary broader discussion, may have played an important role from Classical times not only in Eleusis, but also in other cults, like that in which the Thurian line originated and which (like Xenophon's Tigranes) would have taken support in the positive ideas of *pathos* that are found in tragedy and in Gorgianic theories. On the other hand, this focusing on *pathein* may also have been a source of criticism from other thinkers: as we shall see, Plato, Demosthenes, or the Derveni commentator would probably have agreed that many itinerant initiators went through a shortcut directly to the last stage that substituted learning for some intense emotion.

Spatial and Temporal Imagery

These criticisms and self-positioning assertions provide some keys to the different ways in which the two poles of experiencing and learning are imagined. Aristotle's line is transmitted by the Christian bishop Synesios of Cyrene (early 5th c. CE), who quotes it in a defence of a progressive knowledge of the sacred, whereby only in the last stage is experience more important than learning. Synesios takes part in a debate between the defenders of the long, hard way

11 Aristotle, fr. 15 Rose (probably stemming from his introductory work *Peri philosophias*), transmitted by Synesios' *Dion*, cf. below.

12 Cf. Burkert 1987, 69 with n. 13. *Contra*, Dörrie (1956, 35) states that Synesios' argument is Platonic, but Aristotle's statement is not. For Plato's image of progressive initiation into the mysteries of philosophy, cf. Riedweg 1987 and Nightingale 2005. Bremmer 2014, 1–20 for a thorough description of Eleusis' ritual. Larson (2016, 270–72) thinks that the source of the "doctrine *pathein* not *mathein*" (quite an oxymoron itself) are "the Eleusinian authorities" themselves. That may be true, but the contrast she draws of Eleusinian emotional cult vs. doctrinal Orphism cannot be held: both dimensions appear in both spheres, as the evidence here examined proves.

to attain mystic experiences and those (e.g. some Egyptian monks) that dispensed with any previous training. Though centuries later, his description of both tendencies contains to a certain extent the same images that we find in Classical times – perhaps based on Aristotle's – though we have no way of knowing how far this may be true. This is the whole passage:

> But as to those who tread the other path deemed to be of adamant, even though, to say the truth, some of them arrive at the goal, they seem to me scarcely to have travelled a path at all. For how is a path possible where there is no gradual progress apparent, where there is no first and second stage or any order of going? On the contrary, their procedure is like Bacchic frenzy – like the leap of a man mad, or possessed – the attainment of a goal without running the race, a passing beyond reason without the previous exercise of reasoning (βακχείᾳ καὶ ἅλματι μανικῷ δή τινι καὶ θεοφορήτῳ, καὶ τὸ μὴ δραμόντας εἰς τὸν ἔσχατον ἥκειν, καὶ μὴ κατὰ λόγον ἐνεργήσαντας εἰς τὸ ἐπέκεινα λόγου γενέσθαι). For the sacred matter (τὸ χρῆμα ἱερόν) is not like attention belonging to knowledge, or an outlet of mind, nor is it like one thing in one place and another in another. On the contrary – to compare small and greater – it is like Aristotle's view that men being initiated have not a lesson to learn, but an experience to undergo and a condition into which they must be brought, after having become fit. Now, the state of fitness also is irrational, and if reason play no part in preparing it, much more so. Therefore also their direct descent to some slight deed is itself immediate, and extends much farther: it is like a fall, just as we liken the ascent to a leap (τούτοις οὖν καὶ ἡ κάθοδος εὐθὺς ἐπὶ σμικράν τινα πρᾶξιν, ἄμεσος αὕτη καὶ πολὺ πόρρω, καὶ ἔοικε πτώματι, καθάπερ τὴν ἀναδρομὴν εἰκάζομεν ἅλματι). For reason did not speed them on their way, neither did it receive them on their return.[13]

Synesios distinguishes the image of the progressive path from that of sudden descent (*kathodos*) which he likens to a fall (*ptōma*), in correspondence to sudden ascent (*anadromē*) which he likens to a leap (*halma*). The respective correspondence of two basic images, i.e. horizontal and vertical movements, to the gradual *mathein* and the sudden *pathein*, can be shown to be also valid in Classical times precisely in those documents most closely linked to the Bacchic rites Synesios is alluding to – i.e. the gold tablets.

13 *Dion* 8 (trans. Fitzgerald, modified).

In effect, the Thurian tablet whose text was our starting point enunciates in its fourth line a sudden radical transformation, “from a man into a god,” which seems to be mystically expressed by the ritual formula “a kid you fell into the milk” (θεὸς ἐγένου ἐξ ἀνθρώπου· ἔριφος ἐς γάλα ἔπετες). Divinization after death is exceptional within the sphere of Greek religion, and even within the corpus of “Orphic” gold tablets, most of which just refer to a final state of blessedness. There is only one other tablet with such explicit deification, also found in Thurii (*Orph. Fr.* 488). After four lines depicting the typical supplication of the soul to the Queen of the Underworld, five other lines express in unique formulas a radical transformation from man into god, and vertical sudden movements like leaping and falling:

κύκλου δ᾽ ἐξέπταν βαρυπενθέος ἀργαλέοιο,
ἱμερτοῦ δ᾽ ἐπέβαν στεφάνου ποσὶ καρπαλίμοισι,
δεσποίνας δ᾽ὑπὸ κόλπον ἔδυν χθονίας βασιλείας·
ὄλβιε καὶ μακαριστέ, θεὸς δ᾽ ἔσηι ἀντὶ βροτοῖο.
ἔριφος ἐς γάλ᾽ ἔπετον.

I flew out of the wheel of grief and suffering;
I came up with swift feet to the crown I so desired;
I sank beneath the bosom of the Mistress, Queen of the Underworld,
“Blessed and fortunate one, god will you be, no longer mortal.”
I am the kid that fell into milk.[14]

It cannot be by chance that the line expressing deification is accompanied in both tablets by a ritual formula that is the core of other two tablets, those of Pelinna (Thessaly), which speak in their first line of a radical transformation – death and rebirth. The text in these two tablets is practically the same:

νῦν ἔθανες καὶ νῦν ἐγένου, τρισόλβιε, ἄματι τῶιδε.
εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόναι σ᾽ ὅτι Βάκχιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε.
ταῦρος εἰς γάλα ἔθορες.
αἶψα εἰς γάλα ἔθορες.
κριὸς εἰς γάλα ἔπεσες.

14 The first lines present a supplication of the newly arrived soul to Persephone, which, like other Thurian tablets, presents striking parallels with the Homeric scenes of supplication in the *Odyssey*: cf. Herrero de Jáuregui 2013a. This means that this tablet blends the ‘vertical’ images in the second part with a typically ‘horizontal’ images in the second one.

οἶνον ἔχεις εὐδαίμονα τιμὴν
καὶ σὺ μὲν εἶς ὑπὸ γῆν τελέσας ἅπερ ὄλβιοι ἄλλοι.

Now you died and now came into being, thrice blessed, on this very same day.
Say to Persephone that the Bacchios himself released you.
A bull you leapt into milk,
you quickly leapt into milk,
a ram you fell into milk.
You have wine as your mark of good fortune.
And you will go beneath the earth, having celebrated rites just as the other blessed ones.[15]

The enigmatic expressions like "a kid you fell into the milk," which also appears in the Thurian tablet, have the same aorist in the verb and brief and pregnant style that the mystic *symbola* transmitted by other sources.[16] Whatever their much-discussed original meaning, the utterances in the tablets doubtless refer to some ritual implying immortalization.[17] Now it seems clear that the initial line in the two tablets from Pelinna is functionally equivalent to the *pathein* hexameter in that from Thurii: it refers to a unique experience, birth and rebirth, that is experienced in a particular, special day. Just like Tigranes (and many tragic heroes) would argue, a single day of approaching death provokes a complete change.[18]

There is a common feature to the *symbola* in all these tablets with ritual actions in the aorist that links them to Synesios' description of Bacchic frenzy: I flew out, I came up, I dived, I rushed, I fell … The suddenness of all this leaping does not seem to wholly coincide with the primary image of the descent to Hades of the souls of the dead, which is usually rather progressive until they reach their final destiny (e.g. in the *Deuteronekyia*). In fact, other tablets, e.g. that from Hipponion (*Orph. Fr.* 474) present a much slower progress towards the ultimate destiny, a more traditional account of an uncertain and dangerous

15 *Orph. Fr.* 485–86. Ll. 4 and 6 are lacking in the second tablet.

16 Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 2.15.3: ὑπὸ τὸν παστὸν ἔδυν; Demosthenes, *De corona* 18.259: ἔφυγον κακόν, εὗρον ἄμεινον. This utterance seems a simplification by Demosthenes of usually more enigmatic ritual symbola: cf. Herrero de Jáuregui 2015a.

17 Faraone 2011 and 2013 has convincingly related to Dionysiac rituals of immortalization by leaping into the sea – similar to Theseus' myth, who dived as a boy and emerged as an adult after meeting Amphitrite. Faraone's reconstruction solves the meaning of these actions more satisfactorily than any previous attempts (cf. Bernabé-Jiménez 2008, 76–83; Graf and Johnston 2013, 128–29).

18 Cf. Herrero de Jáuregui 2013b, 51–54.

journey where having learnt the right instructions is the key to reach the goal, "to go along the sacred road that the other famed Bacchic initiates travel." We could distinguish, therefore, between those tablets which depict a progressive descent that leads to a final destiny along other initiates (heroization), and those that allude to a sudden vertical movement that ends up in deification: explicit mutation into god or rebirth are only present in the "vertical tablets," clearly implying a ritual intense experience, i.e. a unique *pathein* that transforms him who endures it. By contrast, concepts linked to true "doctrinal" knowledge, like *alētheia* (truth) and *mnēmosynē* (memory), are the key to salvation in "horizontal tablets" (e.g. that of Hipponion), rather than any *pathēma*.[19]

This distinction of two different conceptions of approaching the sacred (in Synesios) or the gods of the Underworld (the tablets), which are expressed through opposite images of movement with their own temporal and spatial conditions, is an example of the inner consistence of "conceptual metaphors," to use the well-known expression of G. Lakoff and M. Johnson.[20] In the rites and texts that described the process of initiation and of descent to Hades, quickness and verticality would correspond to instantly transformative *pathein* while measured horizontality would express progressive *mathein*.

However, it would be naïve to hope that these two ideal types were exactly reflected in each piece of evidence. There were scarce, if any, pure instances of one of them in isolation. In the "vertical" gold tablets there are also some expressions which remind of the progressive ones: the supplication to Persephone of the newly arrived soul, instructions on what to say and where to go, etc. Furthermore, in the (vertical) tablets from Thurii, with all their reliance on experience, there are dense hexametric formulae that theorize how the *mystēs* reaches deification, as we have seen. In these tablets, the *pathēma* has not wholly eliminated the need of *mathēma*. As the Thurian tablets show, each particular case of a ritual or poetic performance which offered occasion for a tension between *pathos* and *mathos* may have been resolved in a specific *ad hoc* combination. Rather than two pure types, the conceptual clusters around each of these terms form the ideal poles of the axis along which each instance finds its own equilibrium.

19 *Orph. Fr.* 474: "the work of Memory" (l.1); "the lake of Memory" (ll. 6 and 12); *Orph. Fr.* 477: "you will tell them the whole truth" (l.7). For a thorough formulation of this distinction between horizontal and vertical tablets, cf. Herrero de Jáuregui 2015a, 685–92.

20 Lakoff and Johnson 1981. There has been much literature on ancient religion from cognitive perspectives since this seminal work (lately e.g. Larson 2016), but I am not convinced that the newer approaches (cf. nn. 37–38 *infra*) are as useful as this one for the understanding of ancient texts.

Ritual Recreations of Hades

In many theorizations and fabrications of ritual, in line with the Eleusinian trend, the balance would shift naturally to the side of *pathein*, and the linkage with death was the most direct way of showing the ineffability and uniqueness of the ordeal. Most scholars suppose that the cults witnessed by the gold tablets possibly had some initiatory correlate in which a death-like experience was rehearsed. Centuries later, a mystic experience is famously described by Plutarch in a fragment where he assimilates "in sound and in reality," i.e. phonetically and conceptually, the process of dying (*teleutē*) and that of the initiatory *teletē*. Modern readers of this passage have often focused on the description of the terrors of Hades, "panic and shivering and sweat, and amazement," followed by the wonderful blessings. Yet the initial lines are less often quoted, but more relevant for our purpose:

> thus we say that the soul that has passed thither is dead in regard to its complete change and transformation (κατὰ τὴν εἰς τὸ ὅλον μεταβολὴν καὶ μετακόσμησιν). In this world it is without knowledge (ἐνταῦθα δ' ἀγνοεῖ), except when it is already at the point of death; at this point it suffers an experience (τότε δὲ πάσχει πάθος) similar to those who celebrate great initiations.[21]

According to Plutarch, the deathlike experience of some ritual initiations is a way of getting knowledge, just as in real death the soul learns the truth about its destiny. There is no doctrine and no teaching. The "voices and dances and solemnities of sacred utterances and pure visions" (φωνὰς καὶ χορείας καὶ σεμνότητας ἀκουσμάτων ἱερῶν καὶ φασμάτων ἁγίων ἔχοντες) of the final stage seem directed to provoke an experience of blessedness, just as before terror had been felt, but not to instil any particular tenet. In the mysteries whose theory Plutarch is echoing to illustrate his point (separation of body and soul) learning comes from intense feeling, not from teaching – a point similar to Aristotle's, based on the similarity of the mystic experience to that of going down to Hades.

However, though katabatic ritual was prone to emphasizing *pathos*, this did not necessarily exclude the doctrinal pole. In the description of Trophonios' oracle at Lebadeia, Pausanias shows that the entrance into the underground *adyton* was very much like an Underworld descent – in fact a man who had

21 Plutarch, fr. 178 Sandbach. Cf. Burkert 1987, 91–92.

gone down without having fulfilled the ritual and mental requisites was found dead elsewhere, as if having failed in his *katabasis*.[22] Those who descend feel a paralysing terror that makes them unconscious of themselves and of their surroundings (κάτοχόν τε ἔτι τῷ δείματι καὶ ἀγνῶτα ὁμοίως αὑτοῦ τε καὶ τῶν πέλας), which is typical of such sudden returns from the Underworld – e.g. the silent Alkestis in the final scene of Euripides' tragedy. In this descent, their acoustic and/or visual experience was the source from which doctrinal teachings were derived. "Those who have entered the shrine learn the future (διδάσκονται τὰ μέλλοντα), not in one and the same way in all cases, but by sight sometimes and at other times by hearing (πού τις καὶ εἶδε καὶ ἄλλος ἤκουσεν)." Such instruction was not only useful for themselves, but also for the priests who obtained information from them: after the ascent of the inquirer, the priests of the oracle sit him in the throne of Memory and "ask him what he has seen and discovered, from which they learn" (ἀνερωτῶσιν ὁπόσα εἶδέ τε καὶ ἐπύθετο; μαθόντες δέ …).[23] Pausanias confirms from personal testimony that those who have descended into the shrine of Trophonios are obliged to dedicate a tablet on which is written all that each has heard or seen (ἀνάγκη σφᾶς, ὁπόσα ἤκουσεν ἕκαστος ἢ εἶδεν, ἀναθεῖναι γεγραμμένα ἐν πίνακι). The experiences of the inquirers, whose effects are individual and short-lived (with time the paralysed inquirer will recover all his powers and ability to laugh), are recorded to provide material that will be useful for the learning of others.

In Trophonios' oracle the role of *mathein* is underlined by the priests themselves. Yet as we have seen, there were some rituals in which only experience was emphasized in their self-presentation to others and/or in their labelling by others: Aristotle's fragment refers to such rituals from an external perspective, while the Thurian tablet shows the focusing on *pathos* from an internal one. None of these cases of categorizing of a ritual as purely *pathos*-oriented, however, must be immediately taken at face value. Intellectual learning played

22 Pausanias 9.39.11. The tale of a bodyguard of Demetrios who "performed none of the usual rites in the sanctuary, and descended not to consult the god but in the hope of stealing gold and silver from the shrine" and whose body "appeared in a different place, and was not cast out at the sacred mouth," seems oracular propaganda, a kind of ritual equivalent of Peirithoös' failed *katabasis*, in order to show that only in the ritually marked itinerary can one return to life. On Trophonios' oracle, cf. Bonnechere 2003. Pirenne-Delforge 2008, 330 remarks that Pausanias does not present it as a mystery cult, since there is no secrecy: this may explain the larger role of *mathein* in the oracle than in other mystic *katabaseis*.

23 Cf. *LSJ* s.v. for the difference, clearly marked in this text, between πυνθάνομαι (learn by inquiry) and μανθάνω (learn by study).

an important role in katabatic rituals not only when, as in Trophonios' shrine, it was explicitly valued, but also in any other rite that hinted at a journey to the Underworld, even of the most purely emotional and brief kind. After all, obtaining specific knowledge was a fundamental reason to go to Hades.

Knowledge from and of Hades

The consideration of the land of the dead as a most authoritative source of knowledge is common in ancient Greece (as in many other cultures), since the dead are already out of human time, and therefore they have the ability to know past, present, and future alike. In addition, the dead speak from the *telos* of their life, and therefore they are more authorized to say what is true or not about the world they are leaving as well as about their new one. This authoritative knowledge is the ground for all forms of divination that used the dead as source of knowledge, making them come up in necromantic rituals, dreams, etc. – which, of course, encountered quite some scepticism.[24] A more direct possibility of getting such knowledge was not summoning the dead, but visiting them, which provided a more intense encounter which would produce deeper knowledge. The aforementioned texts of Plutarch and Pausanias describe ritual correlates of famous katabatic literature like Odysseus' *Nekyia* and Aeneas' descent: knowledge from Hades could only be fully apprehended by going there.

The problem is, of course, that it is impossible to go down and come back: death is by definition a unique moment that cannot be experienced twice. This practicality did not discourage ancient poets and ritual professionals, who imagined ways to get down "virtually" and create *pathēmata* that, being like those endured by those who die, would grant them knowledge from Hades.[25] Narrations and ritual recreations of descents to the Underworld

24 Ogden 2001. Johnston's recent examination of column V of the Derveni Papyrus (2014), independently supported by Ferrari's new reading "ex Haidou" (2014), shows that such necromantic rituals were those that the Derveni commentator is alluding to. The commentator says that many people do not believe in these terrible visions coming from Hades, and therefore do not learn nor know. He equates learning (*mathein*), knowing (*eidenai*) and believing (*peithein*), opposing them all against pleasure and error, the causes of disbelief in this otherworldly knowledge.

25 Cf. Pindar, *Threnoi* fr. 137 Snell-Maehler, where vision of (probably) mystic rites means knowledge of destiny and origins, a knowledge that will be fulfilled when going to the Underworld: ὄλβιος ὅστις ἰδὼν κεῖν' εἶσ' ὑπὸ χθόν'· | οἶδε μὲν βίου τελευτάν, | οἶδεν δὲ διόσδοτον ἀρχάν. On evidence for the association between initiatory rituals and the process of death, cf. Martín Hernández 2005.

aimed to give mortals a glimpse of the world of the dead before actually going into it. The exceptional perspective of an anticipation of the final outcome of one's life was exploited by poets and priests, and also by philosophers in order to support their ideological discourses. Plato's katabatic myths in *Gorgias* and the *Republic*, Plutarch's at the end of *On the Delays of Divine Vengeance* (*De sera numinis vindicta*), or Vergil's *Aeneid* 6, are famous examples of the ethical and political consequences derived from an account of a descent to Hades. Not only knowledge about the afterlife, but practical teachings about what must be done in this life, were legitimized and made extremely persuasive through *katabasis*.

That the audience was impressed and felt the *pathos* of death was essential for the legitimacy of any persuasive account, and in this effort the spatial and temporal elements were essential in order to create the necessary emotional state: just as the careful preparation of the initiate in Trophonios' ritual and his enclosing under earth are essential for living the unique experience, the vivid descriptions of the Underworld that poets and philosophers make are not ornamental, but indispensable means to transmit the *pathos* of Hades to the audience.[26] Depicting the spaces of the afterlife as Plato does in the *Republic*, *Phaedo*, or the *Timaeus* is an exercise in projecting imaginary landscapes into the minds of the readers; these works became the models for many successful descriptions.[27] The contemplation of the horrors of Hades aims to create a movement of the soul (*metabolē*, *metoikēsis* in Plutarch's words in the fragment quoted above) that will change her mind (*diatethēnai* in Aristotle's). *Mutatis mutandis*, the contemplation of Hell that Jesuit spiritual exercises recommend has the same function.[28] Experiencing the *pathēmata* of *katabasis*,

26 In the literary sphere, the most famous example is the *Aeneid*: Vergil's famous hypallage *ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram* (*Aeneid* 6.268) shows well the intimate connexion of the descendants and the infernal space that is being described. Likewise, the uniqueness and extraordinary moment that is being lived must be underlined (*nunc … nunc* … repeats the Sibyl upon entering Hades in 6.261). Cf. Herrero de Jáuregui 2015b.

27 Already before Plato, Greek itinerant "priests" were used to depict imaginary spaces to compensate through imagination the lack of stable sanctuaries (Herrero de Jáuregui 2015a, 681–85). Plato's eschatological myths created the quasi-canonical models for philosophers to describe the afterlife. Cf. Gagné 2015 on Plutarch's depiction of the Underworld in Thespesios' myth at the end of *De sera numinis vindicta*.

28 Cf. Grafton 2009, 172, who points out how Pierre Hadot discovered the roots of these spiritual exercises in ancient philosophy. Proklos in late antiquity spoke of "*sympatheia* of the souls" achieved by the mysteries (*In Rempublicam* 2.108.17–30 Kroll): cf. Burkert 1987, 114.

an impossible but effective "death before death," through ritual practicing, listening, or reading, was the necessary condition to learn the *mathēmata* from Hades.

However, a verbal or ritual recreation of *katabasis* is reliable only until a "better and truer" one appears.[29] There was no single valid account and many could claim to be the right one. Given the inevitable ideological implications of each version of *katabasis*, the competition of diverse types of descents to Hades made this topic one of the most fertile among the usual agonal singing of Archaic Greek poets. There are many different types of katabatic accounts from antiquity: some of them heroic, others parodic, others derived from ritual, others rooted in philosophy and, just as Dante would centuries later, each of them takes into account the previous katabatic traditions in a spirit of emulation.[30] The type of relation in each case between *pathein* and *mathein* was doubtless one of the main elements of such competition. There could be divergence between many different type of doctrines in the side of *mathein*, and also various forms of *pathein*, but a main factor of differentiation was precisely the emphasis on one or the other pole to a correct grasp of the knowledge from Hades.

It is in this spirit that, before offering Er's account of the afterlife in the *Republic*, a philosophical *katabasis*, Plato rejects superficial descriptions of the blessings and horrors of Hades by those who allege the ancient poets, Homer, Hesiod, Mousaios, and Orpheus. Plato denounces a quick and easy experience of Hades which does not need any previous doctrinal teaching or preparation of the soul.[31] Likewise, the Derveni commentator, in a section where he dwells in the issue of learning and experiencing, criticizes those who attend rites and are unable to understand since, he says, "it is impossible to listen to what is being said and learn at the same time" – an interesting point that elaborates on the fact that real *mathēma* should require reflection before (or after) the

29 Plato, *Gorgias* 527a: εἴ πῃ ζητοῦντες εἴχομεν αὐτῶν βελτίω καὶ ἀληθέστερα εὑρεῖν. The dialogue with Kallikles (523a) shows that accounts of *katabasis* suffered from the same difficulty that necromantic divination (cf. n. 24): scepticism from the side of those auditors that would refuse to partake of the *pathos* of the narrations and the *mathos* derived from it.

30 Cf. Clark 1979 and the contribution by Graf in this volume for overviews of katabatic traditions, and Most 1992 for the appropriateness of the theme of *katabasis* to draw metaliterary judgments over previous versions.

31 Plato, *Republic* 363c: εἰς Ἅιδου γὰρ ἀγαγόντες τῷ λόγῳ. A caricature of a superficial initiation is famously made by Demosthenes, *De corona* 18.259–60. Cf. n. 16.

sensorial *pathēma*, wholly in the spirit of Cyrus' refutation of the one-day experience hypothesized by Tigranes.[32]

These pieces of evidence, almost nauseatingly well-known as *loci classici* of the evidence about Orphism, have been judged by Robert Parker with these words: "the relation between initiation and justice (or "faith" and "works") as techniques of salvation is a recurrent religious problem."[33] However, the conceptual opposition lying in these texts could be formulated in less Pauline terms, using the properly Greek ones that, rather than an ethical aspect (only clear in Plato) stress the shortness and itinerancy of these ambulant rites which appeal to emotion and not to the intellect: *pathein* and *mathein*. These were two poles that were being redefined in Classical times as legitimate sources of knowledge. Their presence was the key to dismiss rival accounts as unconvincing doctrines or as deceiving enchantments, in a world where increasing multiplicity of discourses fostered the need of authorized knowledge.

Thus a credible combination of *pathein* and *mathein* was an essential source of legitimization of accounts of *katabasis*. Each author or builder of ritual discourses could opt for a different proportion, depending on the audience and the literary or ritual genre, by an *ad hoc* resolution of the tension between an emotionally intense experience, based on feeling and senses (seeing, hearing) in a specific unique moment, and the long training necessary to arrive to an intellectual understanding of a consistent and orderly account.[34] Often the former was envisaged and categorized in opposition to the latter, and *pathein* and *mathein* were contraposed as radically incompatible forms of knowledge. Other times, however, they were conciliated in different ways: *pathein* led to *mathein* and vice-versa. Factors like the traditional secrecy of ritual would foster the ineffability of the former, while a philosophically-minded demand for generalizing knowledge would encourage the latter.[35] Whichever solution was adopted, the ultimate aim of emotional experiences and of doctrinal teachings was to be persuasive, and all the different efforts to equilibrate both elements,

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32 Dervenvi Papyrus col. XX: οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τε ἀκοῦσαι ὁμοῦ καὶ μαθεῖν τὰ λεγόμενα. The whole column XX dwells on hearing, learning and learning in rites, though with no explicit mention of *katabasis*.

33 Parker 1995, 509.

34 This tension is also clear in the most famous ancient katabatic account, Vergil's *Aeneid* 6, where doctrinal teachings are in equilibrium with sensorial perceptions, and learning with feeling: cf. Herrero de Jáuregui 2015b.

35 On secret, a typical element associated with ineffable experience that is reserved for initiates, cf. Burkert 1995. However, also doctrine could be associated with secret, hence the so-called *hieroi logoi*, with supposedly reserved teachings, cf. Henrichs 2002.

or to discard one of them completely at the expense of the other, were oriented to the purpose of *peithein*. But of course, none of these attempts had definitive success in eradicating disbelief of katabatic accounts. The Derveni commentator and Plato agree in depicting an extended scepticism about any account of the Underworld. Jokes like Sotades' proved, at the end, at least as successful as all the terrors of and teachings from Hades.

Priority vs. Interdependence

A last question raised by the examination of these texts is that of precedence. Since, as the Derveni commentator says, simultaneity of *pathein* and *mathein* appears as difficult to imagine, some of the aforementioned sources seem to tackle the relation of both poles in terms of chronological priority. Plato imagines learning as being necessarily prior to experience, while Trophonios' priests seem to think that the *pathēmata* of the descendants are the source of their *mathein*.

Now, the sort of verbal discourses that come out as a consequence of an intense emotional experience, as e. g. those that were written down in the tablets of Trophonius' oracle, may of course have been multifarious – Pausanias himself says that sometimes the inquirer heard, others saw. The experience may have varied from case to case, and so even more the written accounts derived from them. Thus the portrait offered by Pausanias would seem *prima facie* to fit nicely not only with the ancient opposition *pathein*/*mathein*, but also with the contemporary "cognitive study of religion," which proposes a model in which intense ineffable "iconic experiences" produce "spontaneous exegetical reflections" that develop in generalizing argumentative ways – and also "flashbulb memories" that bring back to the mind the intensity of the initial emotional experience.[36] This model has, in fact, been applied to explain Greek mystery cults that would be examples of an "imagistic mode of religiosity." From immediate ineffable intense ritual experiences a flood of texts would

36 H. Whitehouse introduced these categories in two ground-breaking works for the cognitive study of religion (2000 and 2004). Later followers (e.g. the collection of studies in Whitehouse and McCauley 2005) have complicated the terminology but it is not clear how this means progress or at least a better tool for the understanding of ancient evidence. It is indicative that none of these works (or others influenced by them like Ustinova 2009 on perception of caves, or Larson 2016, the most ambitious study of Greek religion from a cognitive perspective to this day) even quote the works of G. Lakoff (cf. n. 20), whose "conceptual metaphors" have proved a helpful instrument to a better grasping of ancient texts.

spring that would try to give a discursive exegesis of it, and on the other hand, certain ritual moments when the initial experience would be revived.[37] An ineffable *pathos* would be the original core of mystery cults, and in a logically and chronologically later stage, diverse *mathēmata* would follow.

However, most of the evidence we have examined suggests a less linear model. The texts derived from the recorded tablets in Trophonios' shrine are likely to influence other people's ideas about Hades, and the experience of later descendants to the shrine, just as they have been influenced by previous ones. This process of transmission of the experience is not restricted to participants in the ritual. Reading of texts, listening to recitations, and contemplating images depicting *katabasis*, may bring to mind a whole set of sensations that conform to an experience intimately bound with that of a ritual which actually includes an underground descent. Ancient Greeks conceived dying as going to Hades at the deepest cognitive level, and this basic conceptual metaphor shapes any ritual experience and sustains any narrative discourse built thereupon.[38] If we go back to the Thurian tablet with which we began this study (*Orph. Fr.* 487), the first line "when the soul forsakes the light of sun" sets the context for all that follows, including the ritual *symbola* that convey an experience never undergone before.[39] Accounts such as Plato's myth of Er or Plutarch's myth of Thespesios aim to instil into the audience the feelings of terror and relief not unlike those experienced in the ritual. An individual experience of Hades, unique though it is, is inevitably framed by the collective

37 E.g. Bowden 2010. Whitehouse 2005, 212 himself thinks that "the imagistic mode figures especially in the religions of the ancient world and, until recently, in many small-scale societies and cults." Such chronological priority is also extended into macro-history, making the imagistic mode predominant in the Paleolothic, while docrinal mode would start being extended with Neolithic societies.

38 Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 1980 on what is indeed a "conceptual metaphor" in Lakoff's terminology (cf. n. 20). Even Ustinova 2009, 93, much influenced by Whitehouse's cognitivism, acknowledges that Timarchos' visions in Trophonios' *adyton* (according to Plutarch) would have been "culturally patterned."

39 This line is dismissed as merely formulaic by Scullion (his contribution in this volume), in coherence with his proposal that the defunct who descends is not a "soul" (and therefore cannot be the feminine *kathara* in other Thurian tablets). However, a tablet in which all lines are pregnant with dense meanings is unlikely to start with a line just to set the scene of death with an "empty formula." Besides, in many of the texts we have reviewed the *pathein / mathein* discussion dwells around the soul, including some of Classical times, so it is logical that l.3 refers to the soul alluded to in l. 1. This is my main objection to considering unlikely that *kathara* refers to the soul in the other Thurian tablets (*Orph. Fr.* 488–90), to which this one (*Orph. Fr.* 487) is closest in content and localization.

references transmitted in oral accounts and written texts, reflected in paintings and rituals, in ideological and narrative levels. And vice-versa, each individual account of such experience contributes to the collective tradition with its particular modifications and crystallizations of the previous background.

Thus any personal katabatic experience, be it attained by participating in a ritual or listening to (or reading) an account, is mediated by a much older tradition of both myths and rituals which influences each and every one of those who "experience Hades" in spite of it being a unique ordeal that is necessarily endured only once by each one. Therefore, the doctrinal teachings precede and shape emotional experiences as much as they depend on and are enriched by them. Each author will give priority to the dimension that seems to require more emphasis in a specific given discourse. However, to ask which of the two poles originates first in absolute terms would be, like the old debates about myth and ritual, a restatement of the insoluble problem of the chicken and the egg.

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CHAPTER 7

From Alkestis to Archidike

Thessalian Attitudes to Death and the Afterlife

Sofia Kravaritou and Maria Stamatopoulou

The aim of this chapter is to offer a regional perspective on the issue of Underworld journeys in Antiquity by tracing Thessalian attitudes to Hades from the Classical to the Hellenistic period.* What do we know of the beliefs regarding the Underworld in Thessaly, a land where one of the most famous and successful *katabaseis* occurred? Our starting point will be the most famous Thessalian 'round trip' to Hades, that of Alkestis, portrayed through Athenian eyes in Euripides' tragedy and Plato. This will allow us to discuss eschatological beliefs reflected in fifth-century BCE Athenian literary works and address some of the stereotypes about Thessaly, as both are linked to the questions under discussion. We will then turn to Thessaly itself and examine a variety of relevant evidence pertaining to cults of deities linked with passages and human destiny, the gold lamellae from Pherai and Pharsalos, funerary epigrams from the region echoing themes attested in the lamellae or revealing a concern with or a belief in the possibility of a blessed afterlife or for a 'round trip to the Underworld' and last but not least, the evidence from contemporary Thessalian necropoleis. As will be seen, the Thessalian evidence, although of a complex and often disparate nature, is suggestive of a heightened interest in the safe journey to the Underworld or a blessed afterlife.

Thessaly is strategically situated in the Greek peninsula (*Figure 7.1*). It was very fertile, commanded an excellent cavalry force, and was famous for the wealth and the luxurious lifestyle of its landowning elite families who ruled

* The authors would like to express their warmest thanks to the organizers for the invitation to participate at the conference and their hospitality, and the audience of the conference for useful suggestions, esp. F. Graf. An earlier version of this paper titled "Thessalian Attitudes to Death: Some Notes on *SEG* XXVIII, 528 and Beyond," focusing on Thessalian epigrams, was presented by S. Kravaritou at the Oxford Epigraphy Seminar on 11.11.2013; S. Kravaritou would like to thank R. Parker and J. Ma for their very helpful comments. S. Kravaritou's research was funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 658573. M. Stamatopoulou would like to thank J.-Cl. Decourt for kindly allowing her access to his article on the Marmarini inscription prior to publication, and the Ephorate of Antiquities of Larisa for providing illustrations for this article, in particular S. Katakouta.

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FIGURE 7.1 *Map of Thessaly showing the sites mentioned in the text.*
SOURCE: M. KOPSACHEILI.

in an oligarchic manner in the Archaic and Classical periods.[1] Key sites for our discussion are: Pherai (the marital home of Alkestis), the port cities of Iolkos (place of origin of Alkestis), Pagasai and Amphanai on the western mouth of the Pagasetic Gulf which were under the control of Pherai in Classical times, Demetrias, the major port of Thessaly in the Hellenistic period, as well as inland cities, such as Pelinna, Trikke, Larisa, and Pharsalos.[2]

Thessaly in Literary Sources

The 'Hellenic identity' of its people was not under question, but Classical and later – non-Thessalian – literary sources paint Thessaly as a feudal backwater famous for its excessive luxury and all sorts of abuses,[3] a view that has

1 Stamatopoulou 2007a.
2 Decourt, Nielsen and Helly 2004, 691, 695–97, 699–707 and 719.
3 Stamatopoulou 2007a, 314, n. 33, 327 and nn. 123–34; Wilkins 2000, 79, 97–98 and 287–88; Aston 2012, 258, n. 44, on the only instance of questioning of Thessalian

permeated modern scholarship. The accuracy of much of the above has been challenged recently,[4] and this negative view of Thessaly, especially in Athenian sources, has been seen to conform to the models of representation employed for other 'northern' neighbours and/or prompted by the political system in Thessaly and current political affairs.[5]

Yet, for Classical authors, Thessaly was regarded as a 'strange place'.[6] Already in the fifth century BCE, it is presented as the home of the notorious Thessalian witches who prepared powerful magical potions and possessed supernatural powers.[7] In Aristophanes' *Clouds*, performed in 423 BCE, it is Thessalian witches who could bring down and capture the moon from the sky.[8] This trick became a literary topos; it is mentioned as locus communis (ὅπερ φασὶ) in Plato's *Gorgias* in 390 BCE, and was repeated much later in Plutarch, in his narration of the story of the Thessalian astronomer and magician Aglaonike.[9] It is also common in Latin authors such as Pliny, Apuleius and Lucan, who perpetuated the traditional view of Thessaly as a land of magic, the exotic and the strange. In some of these late traditions, the frightful Thessalian magicians are singled out for their blood thirst and are credited with the ability to transcend the borders between the living and the dead.[10]

Turning to Athenian fifth-century tragic poets, it is evident that Thessalian myth is prominent in their work: there are at least eighty references to members of its legendary royal *oikoi*: of Phthia (Peleus and Achilles), Iolkos (Jason and Pelias), Pherai (Admetos), Phylake (Protesilaos, another Thessalian hero with a successful, if brief, *anodos* from the Underworld),[11] not to mention the Lapiths, Ixion, Peirithous and, last but not least, the tragic end of Herakles near

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Greekness. Key passages include: Xenophon, *Hellenica* 6.1.3; Athenaios, *Deipnosophists* 11.27.f (*chondros*); 1.28.a (slaves); 1.29.b (soft Thessalian chairs); 2.33.7; 2.47.b (hunger); 3.112.a–b and f (*kollix*-bun); 3. 127b–c (*chondros*); 4.137d (lavish dinners); 10.419 b–e (gluttony); 10.434b–d (large portions of meat); 11.413f (large drinking vessels/toasts); 14.663d–e (*mattye*-cake); Plato, *Meno* 70a–b; *Criton* 53 d–e.

4 Morgan 2003, 21–24 and 85–105; Stamatopoulou 2007a; Aston 2012 on Thessalian hospitality; Mili 2015, ch. 6.

5 Stamatopoulou 2007a, 337–38; Stamatopoulou 2007b for Pharsalos; Aston 2012.

6 Zapheiropoulos 2008.

7 Cazeaux 1979, 271–74; Phillips 2002, 378–80; Collins 2008, 53; Vanhaegendoren 2008, 169–75; Mili 2015, 286–90.

8 Aristophanes, *Clouds* 749–50.

9 Plato, *Gorgias* 513a; Plutarch, *On the Decline of the Oracles* 416e–f.

10 Pliny, *Natural History* 30.7; Lucan, *Pharsalia* 6. 438–506 and 603–80; Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 2.21–30. Also: Cazeaux 1979, 265–70; Phillips 2002, 381–84; Ogden 2002, 121–24; Frangoulidis 2008, 13–45; Spaeth 2014; Mili 2015, 286.

11 In Euripides' *Protesilaos*, surviving only in a few fragments: Collard and Crop 2008, vol. 2, 106–17; Öhrman 2009, 47–48.

its southern border, at Herakleia on Trachis in the *Trachiniae*.[12] Equally, one of the Thessalian deities par excellence, the Pheraean En(n)odia, appears in Attic texts as being in charge of the honours paid to the dead along with Hades/Plouto; she is a goddess of crossroads and ghosts and, as daughter of Demeter overseeing nocturnal patrols, she was also assimilated to Hekate.[13]

In these narratives, Thessaly is also portrayed as a strange and wild place, as are its heroes, whose actions often went beyond the norms of society. Ixion, for example, king of the Lapiths, killed his father-in-law and tried to sleep with Hera, and was guilty of a terrible sacrilege – kin-murder and violation of "hospitality rites" (*xenia*) – he was bound by Zeus to a burning solar wheel for all eternity.[14] In addition to those heroic actors, Thessalian people were singled out for their ability to play tricks and perform stratagems. Euripides, for example, makes reference to the "Thessalian crafty trick" (*Thessalōn sophisma*) and "Thessalian traps" (*Thessalōn stochasmata*), while considering their acts "untrustworthy" (*apista*).[15] This negative view of Thessaly in the eyes of Classical Athenians may be partly explained by the following reasons: the geographical position of Thessaly in the northern 'borders' of the Greek world; the medism of Thessaly;[16] the Athenian dependence on the Thessalian cavalry until the mid-fifth century BCE and the Thessalians' shifting alliances (with Athens, Sparta and later Macedonia), which cost the Athenians dearly at the Battle of Tanagra;[17] the extravagant lifestyle of the Thessalian elites, some of whom interacted with Athenians as *xenoi* or had resided in the city during the mid to late fifth century.[18]

Euripides, in his *Medea*, staged in 431 BCE, adheres to this tradition of Thessaly as a locus of magic, by giving the great daughter of Helios and Hekate a Thessalian home, Iolkos.[19] In the play, magical potions that provoked lethal acts are crucial for the regeneration of the Thessalian King Pelias which led to his murder and the

12 Zapheiropoulos 2008, 153 and n. 2.

13 Sophocles, *Antigone* 1199–201; Euripides, *Helen* 569–70; idem, *Ion* 1048–51. For the assimilation of En(n)odia to Hekate, Sophocles, *Rhizotomoi*, fr. 532 Radt; also, *Orphic Hymn to Hekate* v. 1; cf. Hesychios, *s.v.* Φεραία Schmidt; cf. Chrysostomou 1998, 87–88, 112–18 and 187.

14 Aeschylus, *Ixion* fr. 89–93 Radt 1985; *Perrhebides* 300 Radt; Euripides, *Ixion*, fr. 490 Nauck; Sophocles, *Ixion* 145–46 Dios; also, in Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 441, 717–18; Euripides, *Herakles* 1297–98. Also, Belfiore 2000, 125, 127 and 169; Zapheiropoulos 2008, 156–57 and n. 9.

15 Euripides, *Phoinissae* 1407–8; *Bacchae* 1204–7; fr. 426.

16 Westlake 1936, 12–24; Helly 1995, 114–15 and 223–26; Keaveney 1995, 30–38.

17 Spence 2010 on the importance of the Thessalian cavalry as a factor for Athenian relations with Thessaly. For the diplomatic relations and alliances between Athens and the Thessalians: Helly 1995, 105; Sprawski 1999, 25–31; Stamatopoulou 2007a, 337–39; Aston 2012, esp. 261–65.

18 Stamatopoulou 2007b, 213–20 for Pharsalians.

19 Euripides, *Medea* 7–8. Mastronarde 2010, 30, 253 and 298.

murder of her children.[20] We should note here that Mount Pelion, near Iolkos, was (and still is) famous for its plants and was characterized as "one of the most productive places of medicinal plants" (*pharmakodestatos topos*) in Greece.[21] It is possible that Euripides had first-hand knowledge of the region, since in his biographies prefixed to the play in some medieval manuscripts it is stated that, on his way to Macedonia in 408 BCE, he stopped in Magnesia where he was granted the honours of *proxenia* and *ateleia*.[22] Although the validity of many elements of his biography has been seriously questioned and many details are considered anecdotal, a familiarity with the region, either through visit, *xenia* or patronage is possible, especially given the localization elements in at least two of his tragedies.[23]

Alkestis' Round Trip

Whereas Medea's acts in Thessaly link the region with the practice of leathal magic tricks, this was definitely not the case with Euripides' narrative of one of the best known mythical *katabaseis* to the realm of the dead – that of Alkestis, an Iolkian princess who became Pheraean queen.[24] The story takes place at Pherai, a leading Thessalian city of the Classical period, which at the time of the play, the late fifth century BCE, controlled the biggest Thessalian port and the port cities of Iolkos and Pagasai.[25] Given the numerous localization elements in his *Alkestis* and *Andromache*, it is likely that Euripides, staging in front of Athenian eyes questions of human death and eschatology, was aware

20 Euripides, *Medea* 9–10, 792–93. Mastronarde 2010, 30, 253 and 298.

21 Theophrastos, *Enquiry into Plants* 9.15.4; Pliny, *Natural History* 25.53 for the dictamon from Pelion.

22 *Euripides' Vita* 1; Lefkowitz 1979, 189–90; Vahtikari 2014, 87, n. 48 (with earlier bibliography).

23 For the 'Thessalian' element in Euripides' tragedies: Taplin 1999, 41–44; Allan 2000, 149–60; Vahtikari 2014, 52–53, 130–32 (with relation to *Alkestis*); cf. Parker 2007, 217. Contra Scullion 2003 who refutes the presence of Euripides in the north, Macedonia in particular.

24 Euripides, *Alkestis* 260–61. In a way, the Euripidaean *Alkestis* envelops in myth a narration that symbolizes the union between the port and the hinterland; she was the legendary princess of Iolkos married to King Admetos of Pherai characterized by Euripides as "king of the Thessalians (*Thessalon anax*)" (510). For the *katabasis* of Alkestis, see Segal 1993, 51–88; Foley 2001, 303–31; Slater 2013, 67–73; Markantonatos 2013, 131–60; also Foley 2001, 303–31; Mikellidou 2015, 329–52. We should note here that the other successful *anodos* of a Thessalian hero, that of Protesilaos, also narrated by Euripides, was achieved with the intervention of Poseidon: see above n. 11 and also Johnston 1999, 99–100.

25 Béquignon 1937; Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou 1994; Arachoviti 2000; Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou and Arachoviti 2006; See also Decourt, Nielsen and Helly 2004, 704; Helly 2006, 146–47.

of Thessalian traditions. The play's story is well known: Apollo convinces Thanatos to let his impeccable host, King Admetos of Pherai, live, on condition that he find someone else to die instead. Alkestis, his wife, offers willingly to take his place, and in the end Herakles, overpowering Thanatos, fetches her back from the tomb to the Pheraean palace.[26]

The Thessalians' interaction with Hades is presented in this play as a result of divine – and not human – deception: it is Apollo who rescues Admetos from death "by tricking the Fates."[27] Before Alkestis' death, the chorus flirts with the futile hope of Asklepios' intervention, who had played a vital role in successful human round trips to Hades: "for he used to raise the dead."[28] But, as Euripides narrates, Asklepios, a hero with a strong Thessalian pedigree, had already been killed by Zeus. Hence, the chorus loses hope: "But now what hope can I still embrace that she will live?"[29]

Similarly, Admetos himself expresses a wish that he could descend into Hades as a new Orpheus: "If I had the voice and music of Orpheus [...] I would have gone [...] and charmed Persephone and Hades with songs in order to bring Alkestis back to the sunlight alive."[30] In the end, Alkestis' *anodos* is achieved with the intervention of Herakles,[31] the Greek divine hero par excellence and one of the key heroes of Pherai, and someone who has experience of round trips to Hades.[32] As Herakles tells Admetos, Alkestis' *anodos* is not a product of Thessalian witchcraft committed by a human "raiser of souls" (*psychagōgos*),[33] but a result of his heroic deed (e.g. struggle with Thanatos by the tomb). At the same time, the tragic poet throughout the play reminds his audience of human destiny: "Know that death is a debt we all must pay" and "it is not possible for the dead to come back to the light,"[34] views that echo contemporary ideas about the afterlife, as attested in literary testimonia and in contemporary epigrams.[35]

Why is Alkestis exalted in this manner? The narration of her noble deed – to die willingly in place of her husband – is not merely ascribed to

26 Mastronarde 2010, 15–21; Slater 2013, 31–66.

27 Euripides, *Alkestis* 11–12: παιδὸς Φέρητος, ὃν θανεῖν, Μοίρας δολώσας.

28 Euripides, *Alkestis* 126.

29 Euripides, *Alkestis* 130.

30 Euripides, *Alkestis* 357, 360 and 362.

31 Euripides, *Alkestis* 1126–28; Buxton 2013, 210–13.

32 Herakles' *katabasis* to Hades: Euripides, *Herakles;* Mikellidou 2015, 332–37 sees this *katabasis* as proof of heroism. See also the contribution by Verbanck-Piérard in this volume.

33 Euripides, *Alkestis* 1126–28; Zapheiropoulos 2008, 156.

34 Euripides, *Alkestis* 419; 1075.

35 Mili 2015, 278–79, stresses the difference between Thessalian Archaic and Classical epigrams and the Hellenistic ones; in the former there is no interest in the afterlife.

her elevated social status as a noble Thessalian queen.[36] She is repeatedly characterized as "noble (*aristē*)" and is praised for her moral integrity: she is "virtuous" (*agathē* and *esthlē*), "brave" (*gennaia*) and "courageous" (*schetlia tolmēs*), "glorious" (*eukleēs*), and "wise" (*sōphrōn*).[37] Facing the imminent death of this exemplary Pheraean princess, the chorus expresses the wish that "Hermes Chthonios and Hades will receive her kindly and she will be seated next to Persephone."[38] In that sense, this *aristē* woman would posthumously "win a place of privilege in the Underworld," and become a "blessed spirit" (*makaira daimōn*).[39] Euripides' Alkestis becomes an archetypal figure, a virtuous woman who returns to light through her excellent character and with the aid of a hero's intervention. The play ends with a hopeful idea about human death, leaving open the possibility of an unexpected divine intervention in human affairs: "What men expect is not brought to pass, but a god finds a way to achieve the unexpected."[40]

Later, in Plato, following the same Euripidean thread, Alkestis' sacrifice and *anodos* are seen as an example of the sacrifices that Eros can inspire.[41] Plato argues that Alkestis' deed was

> judged so noble by gods as well as men that, although among all the many doers of noble deeds they are few and soon counted to whom the gods have granted the privilege of "having their souls sent up again from Hades" (ἐξ Ἅιδου ἀνεῖναι πάλιν τὴν ψυχήν), hers they thus restored in admiration of her act.[42]

Plato, like Euripides, argues that a round trip to Hades is possible, but he is concerned with the "human soul" (*psyche*), leaving aside the corporal dimension of Alkestis' *anodos*. This tallies with his theories involving the immortality of the soul, and the related issues of the eternal judgment performed by the three Underworld

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36 Euripides, *Alkestis* 1002. See: Johnston 1999, 153; Rehm 1994, 84–89, esp. 89.

37 Euripides, *Alkestis* 83, 150–52, 235, 418, 442, 615, 624, 741–42, 899 and 1083.

38 Euripides, *Alkestis* 743–46.

39 Euripides, *Alkestis* 1003. Johnston 1999, 153 and n. 85 where she envisages that Alkestis will receive hero cult.

40 Euripides, *Alkestis* 1018.

41 Plato, *Symposium* 179b. That the references to Alkestis in Plato's *Symposium* are allusions to Euripides' play rather than to some other version of the myth, is argued in Garner 1990, 64–78; Sansone 1996, 49–51 and esp. 63. For the influence of Plato from contemporary theatrical plays and especially Euripidean tragedies, see Sansone 1996, 35–67, esp. 41.

42 Plato, *Symposium* 179c (trans. Lamb 1925).

Judges, and the metempsychosis of the exemplary human souls.[43] Plato's views greatly influenced the eschatological beliefs of the Macedonian court and subsequently the Hellenistic world, while echoes of them appear on epigrams.[44]

As scholars have pointed out, the Athenian fifth-century narrative of Thessalian Alkestis' mythical round trip to Hades is one of the many attestations of changes in Athenian eschatological beliefs in the late Archaic and early Classical period. Charon and Hermes become benevolent and reassuring figures who aid the journey of the dead to the Underworld,[45] and stories such as Alkestis' and Protesilaos' or Asklepios' imply that there may have existed a "fascination with the possibility that death was not final."[46]

The Evidence from Thessaly: Cults

Having presented the Athenian view of Thessaly and a 'Thessalian' (Alkestis) mythical round trip to Hades, we should now turn to Thessaly itself, and examine what the contemporary archaeological and epigraphic evidence from the region can reveal about Thessalian responses to death or possible afterlife journeys. As mentioned above, Thessaly is often portrayed as a 'land of magic'. Considering the fame of Thessaly as a locus of magic and the plethora of non-Thessalian references to witchcraft, the near absence of pertinent finds from the region is astounding, especially given how common these are in other parts of the Graeco-Roman world.[47] Contrary to the scarcity of evidence pertaining to magic, cults to divinities associated with major passages,

43 On the immortality of the soul: Plato, *Phaedrus* 245c; *Phaedo* 10e, 69e–70a, 73a, 95d, 106b; *Republic* 608d.; *Meno* 81c; *Laws* 10, 609a. On the wandering of the soul and the eternal judgment, see Plato, *Phaedo* 72–77 and 80e–84c; *Phaedrus* 248d–e; *Republic* 10, 614a–621d. Also: Bernabé 2007, 25–44; Edmonds 2004, 159–220; Edmonds 2015, 551–65; Bussanich 2013, 243–76. For a survey on Greek concepts of the soul: Bremmer 2002, 1–40; Reyser 2011.

44 Plato, *Phaedo* 107d–114d; *Rep.* 614b–621d; *Gorgias* 523a–527a; earlier, in Pindar, *Olympian* 2.57–60; Edmonds 2004, 56, 148, 197; Pender 2012, 199–234.

45 Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, esp. 304–20 (Alkestis) and 339.

46 Johnston 1999, 100 and n. 42 where she also discusses the Dioskouroi. The myth of Alkestis is not common on Attic painted pottery. The known vases date to the late 6th–early 5th c.; Alkestis' *anodos* is probably depicted on a black-figure amphora by the Swing Painter in the Louvre, F60 (Beazley Archive database 301554); another black-figure amphora of late Archaic date, by the Three Line Group, depicts the wedding of Admetos and Alkestis (Beazley Archive database 44120).

47 Faraone and Obbink 1991; Gager 1999; Collins 2008, 64–103. An, allegedly, silver curse tablet was retrieved among other finds of the Roman period from the ancient theatre of Phthiotic Thebes: Adrymi-Sismani 2012, 245. The absence of archaeological testimonia

among them passages to the Underworld, seem to have been prominent in the region. It is perhaps significant that many such cults were located at Pherai itself.[48]

It is appropriate to start with En(n)odia, a Thessalian goddess, of possibly Pheraean origin.[49] She was represented on reliefs and Pheraean coins standing or on horseback, with one or two torches, accompanied by her favourite animal attributes, a dog or horse.[50] Civic decrees were erected in her major sanctuary just outside the city walls, in the periphery of the northern cemetery, which also hosted a cult of Zeus Thaulios/Aphrios (*Figure 7.2*).[51] A goddess that protects pathways and crossroads, En(n)odia is also in the Athenian tragedians' work and especially in later sources a goddess of the Underworld, worshipped in cemeteries, and related to ghosts and witchcraft.[52] In the Hellenistic period, En(n)odia was assimilated in Demetrias with Artemis En(n)odia and En(n)odia Hekate.[53] Hekate is well known in Greek literary tradition for her round trips to Hades and her involvement with magic.[54]

Herakles, responsible for Alkestis' *anodos* and safe passage back to the palace of Pherai, was venerated widely in Thessaly, which is hardly surprising if one considers that many leading families in the region claimed Heraclid descent.[55] At Pherai, the evidence pertaining to his cult is plentiful, dating back to the late seventh century BCE. Sanctuaries dedicated to him existed

for magic does not preclude that there was specialization in the use of 'herbs' (*pharmaka*) for medicinal and other purposes.

48 Chysostomou 1998, passim.

49 Chrysostomou 1998, esp. 25–90; Mili 2015, 147–60 (with earlier bibliography).

50 Chrysostomou 1998, 145–46, Figs. 12:4, 5, 7 and 10 (Pheraean coins) and 152–53 (votive relief from Krannon); Heinz 1998, 270.

51 Béquignon 1937, 29ff; Chrysostomou 1998, 25–43; Archoviti, Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou and Tsigara 2012; Mili 2015, 30–31, 35, 112–13, 158 and 336–38.

52 For example, Polyaenus, *Stratagems* 8.43. See Kraus 1960, 77–83; Helly 2010a; Zografou 2010, 114–15.

53 En(n)odia in Demetrias: Chrysostomou 1998, 187–230; Batziou-Efstathiou 2002, 30–33; Kravaritou 2011, 117 and Table 2 (11–12 and 37); Kravaritou 2016, 139–41; Stamatopoulou 2014, 215, 218 and 228–32. Mili 2015, 207 explains the assimilation of Artemis with En(n)odia in Demetrias as indicative of cult practiced by non-local worshippers.

54 Zografou 2010, 68–70; Zografou 2015; Johnston 1999, 202–15 and 238–49; Collins 2008, 64–103; Dickie 2007, 359.

55 On the Heraclid descent of the Aleuads of Larisa: Stamatopoulou 2007a focusing on Pindar's *Pythian Ode* 10; Intzesiloglou 2002 for the myth of Aiatos in relation to the cult by the Late Bronze Age tholos tomb at Georgiko; see also Stamatopoulou 2016, 193–95.

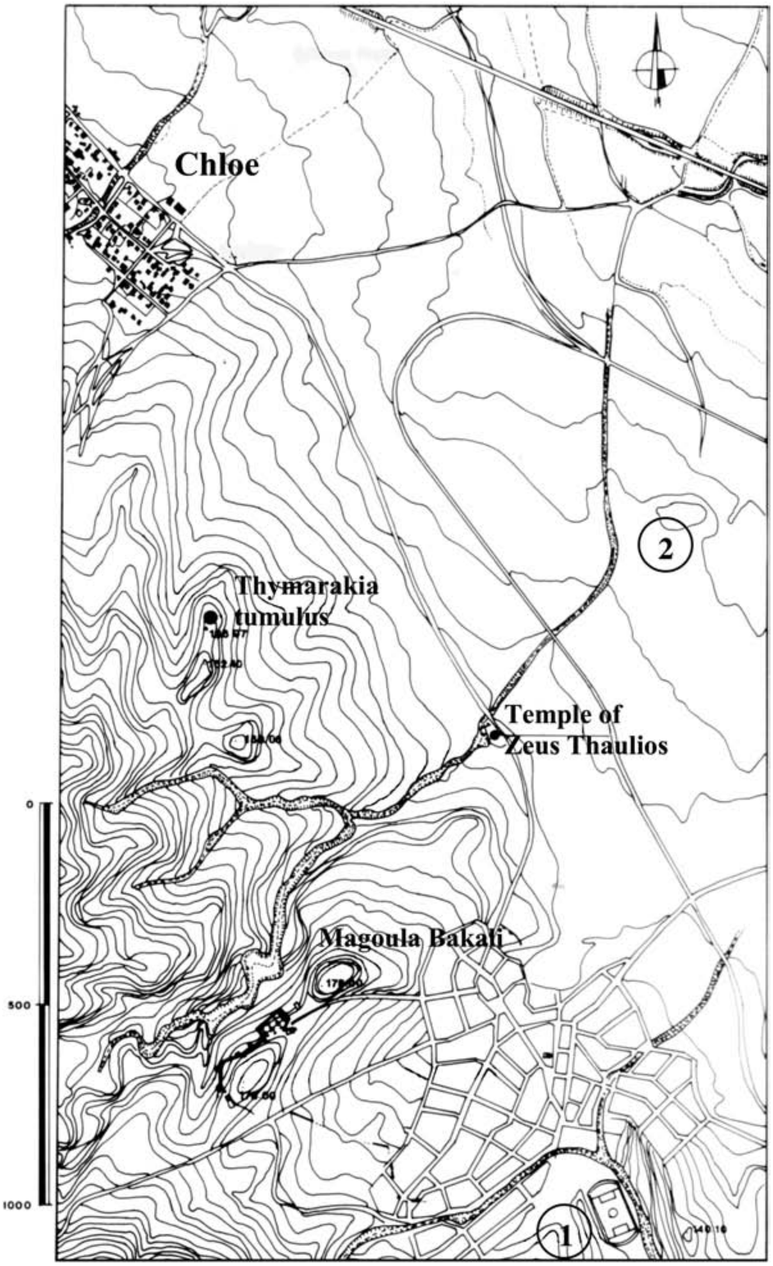


FIGURE 7.2 *Plan of Pherai.*
ADAPTED FROM P. ARACHOVITI, "ΘΟΛΩΤΟΣ ΠΡΩΤΟΓΕΩΜΕΤΡΙΚΟΣ ΤΑΦΟΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΠΕΡΙΟΧΗ ΤΩΝ ΦΕΡΩΝ," IN *«ΘΕΣΣΑΛΙΑ»: ΔΕΚΑΠΕΝΤΕ ΧΡΟΝΙΑ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΗΣ ΕΡΕΥΝΑΣ (1975–1990). ΑΠΟΤΕΛΕΣΜΑΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΠΡΟΟΠΤΙΚΕΣ, ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΑ ΔΙΕΘΝΟΥΣ ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΟΥ,* ΛΥΩΝ 1990, VOL. 2, ATHENS 1994, 127, FIGURE 1.

both in the city near the acropolis and in its *chōra*, to the southeast of the city, near the border of the Pheraean territory and adjacent to the road leading to Pagasai and the harbour.[56]

Alongside cults to divinities associated with major passages, the Thessalian sacred space, Pherai in particular, included cults with a clear metaphysical element, for example that of Dioskouroi. The twin brothers, famous for their *katasterismos* that transformed them posthumously into constellations in the sky, had two sanctuaries at Pherai; their cult is attested in the city at least from the fourth century BCE.[57] One of their sanctuaries was located in the Pheraean chora and is referred to as the *Dioskoureion* in Demosthenes.[58] Outside Pherai, the cult of the Dioskouroi is known from neighbouring Larisa, in the late third century BCE.[59]

Also important in the sacred landscape of Thessaly were cults of divinities associated with human destiny, such as the Moirai and/or Helios. Both were venerated at Pherai, as is attested by two votive inscriptions addressed to the Moirai Patroai, dated to the early third century BCE and found in the area of the northern cemetery of the city,[60] and to Helios.[61] The cults of the Moirai and Helios are also attested epigraphically at Atrax (where Helios was worshipped together with all the "ancestral gods and goddesses"), Krannon and later Metropolis, and in the recently discovered inscription from the northeastern border of the eastern Thessalian plain, where the Moira(i?) and Helios

56 Kakavogiannis 1978, 318–24; Mili 2015, 124. For the cult of Herakles near the church of Ag. Charalambos: Arvanitopoulos 1907, 158–60. In the newly investigated sanctuary at Spartia/Latomio, among the dedications were an inscribed bronze omphalos phiale, fragments of Archaic marble statuary as well as deposits containing burnt animal bones and numerous metal votives, esp. weapons, phialai, obeloi, jewellery as well as pottery of the 7th and 6th c. BCE: Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou 1999, 405; Stamelou and Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou 2010. See also the early epigraphic attestation of a cult of Herakles at Skotoussa (6th c. BCE): *SEG* 25, 1971, 661; Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou 2000, 101–5.

57 Béquignon 1937, 62 and 78; Heinz 1998; 86 and 340–42, cat. nos. 301–3; Stamatopoulou 2013, 48 for a brief mention of the newly discovered votive relief from Velestino; Mili 2015, 173.

58 Demosthenes 19.158; Chrysostomou 1983, 95–106; Pikoulas 2010 refutes Chrysostomou's suggestion about the location of the pandocheion and the Dioskoureion.

59 *SEG* 35, 1985, 605; Heinz 1998, 86 and 342–43, cat. nos. 304–5.

60 Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou 1987, 271; Rakatsanis and Tziafalias 1997, 48; *SEG* 43, 1993, 305 (3rd c. BCE); Heinz 1998, 319, cat. no. 263, fig. 44.

61 Hellenistic votive stele to Helios: Béquignon 1937, 89, no. 56; Heinz 1998, 77 and 312, cat. no. 250.

received joint cult.[62] Both the Moirai and Helios were closely linked with human fate and death. Literary testimonia stress that the Moirai controlled the thread of life, already from the moment of birth.[63] In Euripides' *Alkestis*, Apollo saves Admetos from his destined death by "tricking them" (ll. 12 and 33: *Moiras dolōsas*), while in the early second century BCE funerary epigram of Hediste from Demetrias, who died prematurely during childbirth along with her child, the terrible loss is again attributed to the Fates: "The *Moirai* spun on their spindles for Hediste their painful thread, when the bride went to meet the pains of labour."[64] Similarly, the passage to death is symbolically referred to as a passage from sunlight to darkness, for example in *Alkestis* line 18, where Apollo states that by choosing to die for her husband she will no longer see the light, a motif that is very common in epigrams.[65] The presence of the cults of the Moirai and Helios in Thessaly implies a general interest in the moment when human destiny meets death, and therefore new challenges. It is perhaps relevant that in Thessaly there existed a *temenos* closely associated with the Underworld divinities, that of Plouton and Persephone in Perrhaibia (near the spring Mati), which according to some scholars marked one of the entrances to the Underworld.[66]

Dionysos, who in mystery cults of the late Classical and Hellenistic periods mediated between Persephone and the initiates, was worshipped widely at Pherai and his cult is attested in numerous ways, including the famous gold lamellae, which date to the late fourth and early third centuries BCE,[67] and reveal the concern both for the journey and the life beyond. The first lamella, from the southern cemetery of the city, declares the mystic passwords that

62 Atrax: votive stele to "Helios, first king, and All Gods Patrooi and Goddesses": *SEG* 34, 1984, 492 (end of 3rd c. BCE); Rakatsanis and Tziafalias 1997, 72, fig. 50; Heinz 1998, 312–13, cat. no. 251, fig. 168; also, Tziafalias et al. 2016, 77 and 150. Krannon, *IG* IX:2 464 (2nd c. BCE); Heinz 1998, 312–13, cat. no. 251, fig. 168. Metropolis, *IG* IX:2 282 (2nd c. BCE); Heinz 1998, 319–20, cat. no. 264, fig. 103. Marmarini inscription: Decourt and Tziafalias 2012, 463–65; Decourt and Tziafalias 2015; Parker and Scullion 2016, 209–66.

63 Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2011, 103–9; Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2015, 42–43; cf. Pironti 2009, 13–27.

64 Hediste stele (early 2nd c. BCE): Arvanitopoulos 1909, no. 1, 215–19; Arvanitopoulos 1928, 147–49; Peek 1955, no. 1606; Cairon 2009, 260–62; Saloway 2012, 251–55, esp. 254, for the role of the Fates. Moirai in other Thessalian epigrams: *SEG* 26, 1976–77, 645. *IG* IX:2 656 and 640. See also Plato, *Republic* 617c.

65 For a Thessalian example see: *IG* IX:2 429, l. 4: πάλιν ἦλθες ἂν εἰς φῶ[ς].

66 Lucas 2002, 107–24; Helly 2010b, 98, n. 20; Mili 2015, 283, n. 129. See also the paper by Friese in this volume.

67 Dionysos' cult at Pherai: Chrysostomou 1994, 113–49.



FIGURE 7.3 *Gold leaf from the northern cemetery of Pherai in Athens, National Archaeological Museum X1130.*
PHOTOGRAPH: M. STAMATOPOULOU.

most likely relate to initiation.[68] In the second one (*Figure 7.3*), from Magoula Mati in the northern cemetery of the city, which mentions Demeter Chthonia and Oreia Meter, the deceased claims a place among the *thiasoi* of the initiates in the Underworld, not due to virtuous deeds (like Alkestis) but by virtue of his ritual acts.[69]

Gold lamellae are known from many areas of the Greek world, in particular South Italy, Thessaly, Crete and Macedonia.[70] What characterizes the Thessalian lamellae is their great variety in form, text and divinities.[71] Besides the Pheraean examples, another four lamellae are known from the region: the Pharsalos and Getty ones contain instructions to the deceased in order to find his way in the Underworld, by declaring himself to be the son of the earth and starry heaven.[72] On the Pelinna ivy leaves (*Figure 7.4*), found in the tomb of a woman interred

68 *SEG* 45, 1995, 646; *OF* 493 (=L 13) (Pherai, 350–300 BCE); Edmonds 2011, 37; Graf and Johnston 2013, 38–39, no. 27: "Passwords: Man-and-child-thyrsos. Man-and-child-thyrsos. Brimo, Brimo. Enter the sacred meadow. For the initiate is redeemed. GAPEDON".

69 Parker and Stamatopoulou 2004 [2007], 1–32; *Orph. Fr.* 493A (= L13a) (Pherai, late 4th/early 3rd c. BCE); Graf and Johnston 2013, 38–39, no. 28: "Send me to the *thiasoi* of the initiates. I have (seen) / I possess the rites/tokens/the initiations […] of Demeter Chthonia and of the Mountain Mother". See also the contribution by Scullion in this volume.

70 Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 2–8; Tzifopoulos 2010; Edmonds 2011, 15–50; Graf and Johnston 2013, 1–49.

71 Parker and Stamatopoulou 2004 [2007], 18–23 for a discussion of the context and features of the leaves. Also Tzifopoulos 2010, esp. 255–84, for the context of all known leaves.

72 Decourt 1995, 128, no. 115; *Orph. Fr.* 477 (=L 4) (Pharsalos, 350–300 BCE). *Orph. Fr.* 484 (=L 6) (Unknown location in Thessaly, middle 4th c. BCE): Graf and Johnston 2013, 34–35, no. 25 and 40–41, no. 29.



FIGURE 7.4 *Gold leaf from the cemetery of Pelinna.*
PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF THE EPHORATE OF ANTIQUITIES OF LARISA.

with a neonate, Bacchios figures prominently.[73] He is the mediating power arguing for a triple *makarismos* of the deceased: "Now you have died and now you have been born, thrice blessed one (*trisolbie*), on this very day. Say to Persephone that Bacchios himself freed you (*Bakchios autos eluse*)."[74]

It is a topos in modern scholarship that the texts of those lamellae, confined to private contexts, express positive emotions towards death and the passage to the afterlife; they were the reserve of the pious devotees who had chosen to undergo a private initiation during their lifetime.[75]

The Evidence from Thessaly: Funerary Epigrams

Positive emotions towards death and the afterlife can be also detected in more public contexts, for example funerary epigrams.[76] Thus, it has been tentatively

73 Tsantsanoglou and Parasoglou 1987, 3–16; *Orph. Fr.* 485–486 (=L 7a–b) (Pelinna, late 4th/early 3rd c. BCE).

74 *Orph. Fr.* 485–486 (=L 7a–b) ll. 1–2 (translation Graf and Johnston 2013, 36–37, no. 26 a,b.). See also the contributions by Scullion and Herrero de Jáuregui in this volume.

75 Riedweg 2011, 219–56; Edmonds 2004, 200–1; Graf and Johnston 2013, 94–136; Bremmer 2014, 55–80; Chaniotis 2012a, 97.

76 Tsagalis 2008, 39, 86 and 135–59; Wypustek 2013, 5–35, 48–52, 71–73, 78–79, 90 and 125.

suggested by specialists in 'Orphic' religion and funerary epigrams that it is possible to discern hidden 'Orphic' elements in some epigrams of the late Classical and Hellenistic eras.[77] Wypustek has recently refuted this and argued that the texts betraying an Orphic and Pythagorean influence are rare and almost impossible to identify.[78]

Concerning Hellenistic Thessalian funerary epigrams, alongside the wide spectrum of negative emotions, such as sadness, grief and pain for the cut of someone's thread of life or the painful loss of beloved ones, and fear toward the divine powers which provoked it, there is also a parallel display of positive emotions – pride but also hope – that eventually marks the passage from life to death. Here, as will be shown below, death is also connected to joy, and even anticipation for the transport of the soul to the Underworld, a hope for immortality and a potential, though highly improbable, return of virtuous devotees to life.

For example, in an early third-century epigram from Pherai, the deceased Lykophron claims: "I, Lykophron, the son of Philiskos, seem (*doxei*) sprung from the root of great Zeus, but in truth (*aletheiai*) am from the immortal fire; and I live among the heavenly stars uplifted by my father; but the body born of my mother occupies mother-earth."[79] Avagianou rightly pointed out a series of syntactic and semantic oppositions that find parallels in Pre-Socratic texts, the commentary of the Derveni papyrus and the 'Bacchic-Orphic' texts.[80] In particular, she has drawn parallels between the couplets *doxa-alētheiai* (l. 2), *sōma-psychē* (ll. 3–4) of the epigram and the graffiti of the Olbia bone tablets. She has also argued that the semantics of the expressions "I live among the heavenly stars" (l. 3) and "the body born of my mother occupies mother-earth" (l. 4) recall or evoke the famous password "I am a son of the earth and the starry heaven," used by the 'Bacchic-Orphic' initiates in order to justify before the guardians of the Underworld their claim upon a favoured place in the "sacred meadows."[81] Avagianou thus concluded that Lykophron was probably

77 Graf 1985, 130, n. 75; Hughes 1999, 171; Bernabé 2004–2007, no. 466; Tsagalis 2008, 125–30 and 314; Cairon 2009, 225 and 263–64; Herrero de Jáuregui 2010, 69–70; cf. Chaniotis 2013, 256.

78 Wypustek 2013, 74, 109 and 112; see also for the Macedonian epigrams Kalaitzi 2016a, 109, esp. n. 87; Kalaitzi 2016b, 508–9.

79 Peek 1974, no 25; *LARE* 28, 1978, 528; Theocharis 1967, 297, fig. 196; Merkelbach 1973, 156; Avagianou 2002a, 75 (translation); Mili 2015, 276.

80 Avagianou 2002a, 76–78.

81 Avagianou 2002a, 82–88. On the 'Orphic' password, Edmonds 2004, 64–82; Benz 2011, 102–19.

a heroized initiate in the local 'Bacchic-Orphic' mysteries.[82] We must bear in mind however that none of the texts of the Pherai tablets contain a dialogue with the famous phrase of earthly-astral eschatology, as the Pharsalos lamella does.[83] When there is dialogue between the deceased and the powers of the Underworld, the key to the desired afterlife rests on initiation rites, including ritual passwords, and not on claims of shared genealogy as it happens in Lykophron's case.[84] Moreover, the expression of dualistic eschatological ideas, where the sky is often the residence of the soul and the body stays under the earth, constitutes one of the topoi of late Classical and Hellenistic epigrams: that of astral immortality.[85] This literary motif – astral immortality – has yet to be convincingly related to 'Orphic' or 'Bacchic-Orphic' practices and beliefs.

Furthermore, as far as the opposition soul-body in Thessalian epigrams is concerned,[86] this is stated for example in the fourth-century BCE epigram of Sosikrates from Gonnoi which proclaims that his "tomb is enveloped in a mound of earth while his soul is wandering, after having joined the aetherial order."[87] The epigram bears witness to the belief in a posthumous aetherial abode of the soul, another topos in Hellenistic epigrams, attested since the fifth century BCE.[88]

Moving to Thessalian epigrams that include direct references to the Underworld, we observe that a positive attitude towards the afterlife is expressed in the third century BCE epigram for Corinthian Agathokles, from Demetrias.[89] The text invites Persephone to receive a deceased who "descends" to her (*pros se katerchomenon*) and settle him in the "meadow of the pious"

82 Avagianou 2002a, 88–89.

83 Decourt 1995, 128, no. 115; *Orph. Fr.* 477 (=L 4) (Pharsalos, 350–300 BCE).

84 On Lykophron's genealogy, see Avagianou 2002a, 77–79; Wypustek 2013, 45–47.

85 See for example, *IG* XII:8 609, ll. 3–4 (Thasos): ψυχὴ δ' ἀθανάτων] βουλαῖς ἐπ]ιδ]ή{ο}μιός {ἐπιδήμιός} ἐστιν ἄστροις; *IG* XII:7 123, l. 6 (Amorgos), ἀστὴρ γὰρ γενόμην θεῖος ἀκρεσπέρ ιος; Wypustek 2013, 48–53. For the connection between the human soul and heaven in literature from the early Hellenistic period onwards, see Burkert 1972, 360.

86 On the opposition body-soul: Tsagalis 2008, 121–27.

87 *SEG* 38, 1988, 440.

88 See for example the funerary epigram from Kerameikos (Peek 1955, 8–9) which commemorates the loss as well as the virtues of the Athenian soldiers at the battle of Poteidaia in 432/1 BCE, which has been used as evidence of the influence from Pre-Socratic philosophical ideas, also present in the work of tragic poets, such as Euripides, see Mihai 2010, 553–82.

89 Arvanitopoulos 1909, 442, no. 194, ll. 1–3; also, Peek 1955, 1572; Cairon 2009, 70 and 226; Mili 2015, 275.

(*eusebeōn leimōna*), a rare expression in metrical epitaphs. The virtues of the deceased are praised: he was a pious man, a frontrunner in kindness and was inhabited by a soul that was "true" (*alēthēs*), "pure" (*kathara*) and "just" (*dikaiē*).[90] Chaniotis has recently noted that the appraisal of the virtues of the deceased – piety, purity and justice – reflects the idea that in order to join the "Blessed" (*eusebeis*) in the Underworld one needs more than just to perform certain rituals (e.g. purification or initiation); he/she must also have exhibited a moral conduct during his lifetime.[91] Cairon has linked this text with 'Bacchic-Orphic' ideas, mainly because of the expression "meadow of the pious," which is rarely attested in epigrams.[92] It should be emphasized that the texts of the 'Bacchic-Orphic' gold lamellae from Pherai and Thurii, where there is mention of the "meadows," include a semantic differentiation: "Meadow of the Sacred" (*hierōn leimōna*) instead of the "meadow of the pious" (*eusebeōn leimona*) of the epigram.[93] In a slightly later epigram for Ammonios, also from Demetrias, the moral conduct of the deceased (focusing on his *eusebeia*) is again assessed in front of Persephone; he has travelled the "way of no return" (*adiaulon hodon*).[94]

A contemporary epigram from Demetrias, dated to c. 217 BCE, introduces the theme of the eternal judgment, performed by the three Underworld judges. The text mentions only Minos who "has descended" (*katēgage*) the soul of Antigenes to the "Islands of the Blessed" (*makārōn nēsous*).[95] Once again the favourable reception to the Underworld is due to the conduct of the deceased on the battlefield. Antigenes defended his country, the corps of the "ephebes" (l. 10. *ton hēbētēn sōizōn lochon*) and his ancestral cults (l. 11: Zeus, which is an allusion to the poliadic cult of Zeus Akraios in Demetrias) with valour.[96] In line 13, it is stated that his body was covered by the earth of (Phthiotic)

90 Arvanitopoulos 1909, 442, no. 194, ll. 3–4.

91 Chaniotis 2000, 169–70; Chaniotis 2012b, 123–39; Chaniotis 2013, 256; Bernabé 2012, 18–19.

92 Cairon 2009, 225; Chaniotis 2013, 256.

93 On 'sacred meadows' in the gold tablets, see *SEG* 45, 1995, 646, l. 4; *Orph. Fr.* 493 (=L 13) (Pherai, 350–300 BCE). *Orph. Fr.* 487 (=L 8) (Thurii 1, 4th c. BCE). For the meadows as the destination of the soul in the Underworld: Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 174–77.

94 Arvanitopoulou 1934–1940, 28, no. 3, l. 7, figs. 7–9; Peek 1960, no. 210; Mili 2015, 275.

95 Arvanitopoulos 1909, 128, no. 10, l. 2; also, Cairon 2009, 233–38, no. 74; Boehm 2015, with whose conclusions regarding Alexander of Pherai we do not agree. For the "Islands of the Blessed" on epigrams of those considered as heroes: Wypustek 2013, 6–28, 114, 182–85, esp. 88–89 and 154–55.

96 Arvanitopoulos 1909, 128, no. 10, ll. 3–5, 9–13.

Thebes (e.g. the battlefield), a clear allusion to the contemporary belief of the body-soul separation, since if his body rested at Thebes it was his soul that was received in the Isles of the Blessed.

Apparently, the "Islands of the Blessed" were not reserved exclusively for virtuous male devotees. An epigram dated to end of the third century BCE from Demetrias, for the Cretan Archidike (*Figure 7.5*), contains an appeal to the Judges of the Underworld (ll. 1–3):

εἰ κέκρικας χρηστήν, Ῥαδάμανθυ, γυναῖκα καὶ ἄλλην,
ἢ Μίνως, καὶ τήνδε, οὖσαν Ἀριστομάχου
κούρην· εἰς μακάρων νήσους ἄγετ᾽· εὐσεβίαν γὰρ
ἤσκει καὶ σύνεδρον τῆσδε δικαιοσύνην.
ἣν Τύλισος μὲν ἔθρεψε, πόλις Κρῆσσα, ἥδε δὲ γαῖα
ἀμφέπει ἀθάνατον· μοῖρα σοί, Ἀρχιδίκη.

Rhadamanthys, if you have judged another woman to be kind, or you, Minos, also lead this woman to the Island of the Blessed, the daughter of Aristomachos. For she practised piety and its associate, justice. She was nurtured by Tylissos, a Cretan city, while this very earth enfolds her, immortal; this is your fate, Archidike. [97]

Lines 3–4 include the motif of excellent moral conduct as a prerequisite for the transportation. *Chrēstē* Archidike – a new *aristē* Alkestis – "practiced piety" (*eusebian ēskei*) and "its associate, justice" (*synedron dikaiosynēn*). Lines 5–6 mention that Archidike was raised at Tylissos, on Crete, while "this very earth enfolds her immortal" (*athanaton*). "This is your fate (μοῖρα σοί), Archidike." The qualification "immortal" (l. 6) must be referring to the immortality of her soul.[98] The formula ἀμφέπει ἀθάνατον occurs once more in Demetrias, in a contemporary epigram adorning the tomb of a poet.[99] These references

97 Arvanitopoulos 1909, 155, no. 20; also Peek 1955, 1693; Cairon 2009, 86; Saloway 2012, 255–57. The first four lines of the epigram are translated by A. Chaniotis, 'Epigraphic bulletin', *Kernos* 29, 2016, 256.

98 Compare the much later epigram, in *ICilicie*, 32 (Cilicia, 4th c. BCE) where there is mention (l. 5) of *athanate psyche*. Cairon 2009, 263–64 associates the qualification "immortal" with ideas of immortality and possibly with orphism; Petrovic (2010, 621) argues that since Plato the idea of the "immortal soul" had become one of the consolatory motifs of the funerary epigrams that were frequently linked with the "Isles of the Blessed".

99 Arvanitopoulou 1934–1940, 49, no. 8, l. 4: "Now, this very earth enfolds me (*amphepei*), immortal (*athanaton*)"; Peek 1955, 1074; Cairon 2009, 231–33, no. 73.

to immortality are considered a unicum for the third and even second century BCE and evidently relate to the elevated position of the deceased. It is significant that in the epigram of Archidike two of the three judges of the Underworld, Minos and Rhadamanthys, are addressed. This is the first attestation of Rhadamanthys in a funerary epigram along with Minos, since normally only Minos is mentioned.[100] The idea of the judgment of the soul spread from the fifth century BCE onwards and is well known from *Gorgias* and other Platonic dialogues.[101] Mili has recently linked the presence of the Judges to Archidike's Cretan origin,[102] but the motif of the eternal judgment by Minos and Rhadamanthys fits equally well in a royal Macedonian foundation like Demetrias.[103] Macedonian eschatological imagery includes the judgment of the dead: Rhadamanthys, along with Aiakos and Hermes are depicted on the façade of the late fourth century BCE 'judgment tomb' at Lefkadia, ancient Mieza, implying an exalted position for the deceased warrior, who like Antigenes in the Demetrias epigram, had displayed military *arete* and valour.[104]

In another third-century BCE epigram from Pherai the deceased Pyrrhos is also praised (l.1) for his moral qualities, "prudence" (*sophrosynē*) and "virtue" (*aretē*), that granted him a happy afterlife in the "inaccessible chambers" (*adutous thalamous*) of Persephone.[105] Here the realization of a round trip to Hades is regarded as impossible: "If it were possible to make an ascent of the virtuous men, you would have come to light again, abandoning the inaccessible chambers of Persephone."[106] The expression of the improbable wish of a return of a beloved one from the Underworld is known from other Hellenistic epigrams,[107] but can also be traced back to the Classical period, for example in

100 Wypustek 2013, 73 and 184. References to Rhadamanthys are rare: *SEG* 30, 60. For the stele of Hadista (Aiani 3) from Upper Macedonia, see also Kalaitzi 2016a, 94, n. 124, 109, esp. n. 291 and 167.

101 Wypustek 2013, 88–89 and 154–55.

102 Mili 2015, 207–8.

103 Given the Macedonians' fondness for Platonic philosophy. For the Platonic influence in Demetrias, Hatzopoulos 1996, 163–64; Kravaritou 2011, 122; Saloway 2012, 256 comments on the Cretan origin but also points out the Macedonian connection.

104 Hatzopoulos 2006, 133–34, fig. 57(1); Breculaki 2006, 205–11, pls. 74–76.

105 *IG* IX:2 429; Peek 1955, 99; Cairon 2009, 246–47, no. 78; Mili 2015, 275. Tsagalis 2008, 95 sees the "chambers of Persephone" as a well-established metaphor of Euripidean origin that in the 4th c. BCE became a common motif in Attic grave epigrams under the influence of the Eleusinian mysteries.

106 *IG* IX:2 429, ll. 3–4: εἰ δ' ἦν τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς ἀνάγειν, πάλιν ἦλθες ἂν εἰς φῶ[ς]. The same formula denoting impossibility is found in *ISmyrna* 278.

107 For example, *ISmyrna* 557.

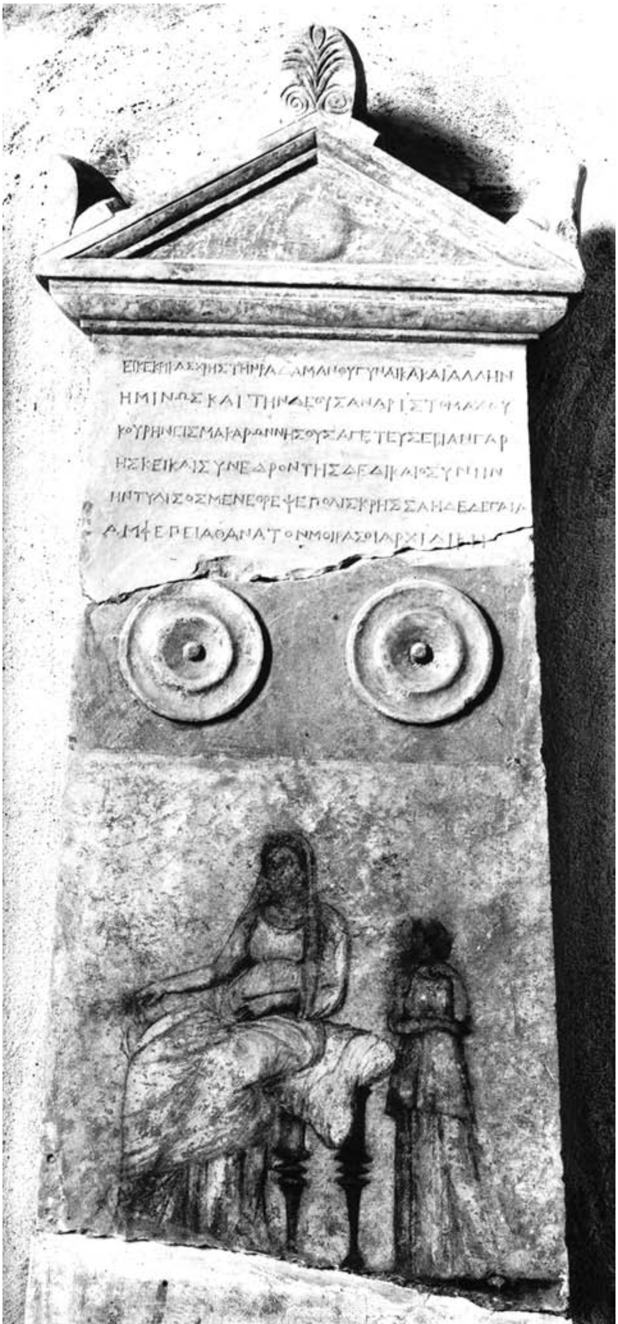


FIGURE 7.5 *Grave stele of Archidike from Demetrias. Athanasakeion Archaeological Museum of Volos, Λ20.*
PHOTOGRAPH: DAI ATHENS.

Euripides' *Alkestis* (ll. 122–26, discussed above). If we compare the epigram of Pyrrhos to that of Lykophron from the same city, it is evident that they express completely different ideas, and reveal parallel attitudes towards death within the same city.

Thessalian epigrams embracing Hellenistic topoi regarding the voyage of the dead to the Underworld occasionally evoke Hermes. For example, an epigram from Atrax for the physician Dikaios and his wife, Philista, dated to the late third century BCE claims (ll. 11–14) that Hermes Eriounios ("the helpful one") brought and installed them on the "Island of the Pious" (*Eusebeōn eis nāson*), among the "virtuous men" (*agathois*) (*Figure 7.6–7*).[108] The desire on the part of the Thessalians, especially in the Hellenistic period, to ensure divine protection for their dead and in particular a safe passage on their journey to the Underworld is expressed by the dedication of their tombstones to Hermes Chthonios, through the depiction of a herm and/or a dedicatory inscription to him in dative or genitive.[109] The Hellenistic stelai of Demetrias are revealing, because his image is included regardless of the social status, ethnic and cultural identity of the deceased.[110]

At this point we should stress that Thessalian epigrams frequently do not express hope and anticipation, since the wrath of the divine powers towards a mortal could provoke death and/or separation from the beloved ones as punishment. A good example is an epigram from Larisa where it is stated (ll. 7–9) that Parmonis was struck by "the spirit's wrath" (*daimonos orgē*) and that grief must stop because the "deceased cannot rise" (*thanonta ouden egeirei*).[111] Another epigram from the same city expresses (ll. 6–7) a rational attitude regarding human fate: "such is life" (*tauta outōs echei o bios*).[112]

But who are the dead in the epigrams for whom a special place in the afterlife is envisaged? Archidike is exceptional by Thessalian standards. It has been claimed that she belonged to an affluent family of Cretans resident in Demetrias.[113] The use of a traditional male profile for a woman and

108 *SEG* 34, 1984, 497; Tziafalias et al. 2016, 226–31, no. 165 and pl. 34; Cairon 2009, no. 94. On Hermes Eriounios, Avagianou 1997, 209–13; Mili 2015, 274.

109 Avagianou 2002b; Mili 2015, 274–78; see also Kalaitzi 2016a, 65–66 in the context of her discussion of the Beroian stele of Hadea.

110 Stamatopoulou 1999, 153–62; Kravaritou 2011, 118–19, 126 and 131; idem 2016, 141.

111 *IG* IX:2 640; also Mili 2015, 275.

112 *IG* IX:2 943. For the expression of doubts regarding the existence of an afterlife, see Wypustek 2013, 18–19. Also: *IG* IX:2 651, ll. 5–6 (Larisa, Roman period): "nobody is immortal" and the same formula in a gold tablet, in Blumell 2011, 166–68.

113 Saloway 2012, 257.



FIGURE 7.6 *Grave stele of Dikaios and Philista from Atrax. Larisa Archaeological Museum 78/59.* PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF THE EPHORATE OF ANTIQUITIES OF LARISA.

the characterization "immortal" equates Archidike to heroines of previous eras who had beaten death (for example the *aristē* Alkestis) and reveals the interest of her social circle/family in eschatological ideas. The "immortal" Argive Phaidon, a poet, who is characterized by the Hesiodic phrase as "a servant of the Muses" (Ṃουσῶν θεράπων), "possessing knowledge of the traits of wisdom" (*sopha* [*eidōs*]) must have been known among intellectuals in



FIGURE 7.7 *Detail of the grave stele of Dikaios and Philista from Atrax. Larisa Archaeological Museum 78/59.*
PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF THE EPHORATE OF ANTIQUITIES OF LARISA.

Thessalian cities.[114] Philiste and her husband Dikaios, a doctor, also aspire to a privileged place in the Underworld; the high esteem for doctors is confirmed by the frequent conferment of public honours in Hellenistic cities.[115]

Thus the aforementioned epigrams indicate that the commemorated individuals were members of prominent and educated families sharing

114 For Hellenistic poets: Klooster 2011, 147–74; Lefkovitz 2012, 113–27; in Thessaly: Santin 2013. The depiction of intellectuals in early Hellenistic funerary art is related to the contemporaneous rising importance of education: Harris 1989, 116–46; Zanker 1995, 75–76 and 194–97; Gribiore 2001. Also Lilimpaki-Akamati 2007 for the 'Philosophers' tomb' at Pella. A number of painted tombstones from Demetrias depict men either holding a book roll or engaged in reading and writing (e.g. Volos Museum Λ126, Λ244, Λ254, Λ351, Λ9 and possibly Λ143).

115 Medicine and philosophy: Hankinson 2003, 275–77. Honours for doctors: Massar 2001.

eschatological/soteriological beliefs that were in vogue among contemporary philosophical circles: a virtuous lifestyle aimed at an advantageous judgment and a place in the "meadows." While it is not unthinkable that some of them might have been initiates to mystery cults,[116] there is no such reference in any of the inscriptions discussed so far.

In accord with contemporary trends, Thessalian epigrams stress the importance of a virtuous lifestyle as prerequisite for a better place in the afterlife, not merely participation in initiation rituals.[117] Hence there is a semantic difference between the texts of the lamellae and the epigrams; in the former the dead are asked to "unlock" the entrance to the sacred meadows of Persephone by using secret passwords received from Bakkhos or following initiation rituals, and there is no interest in publicly announcing previous moral conduct.

All stelai bearing the epigrams discussed above were found out of context, therefore we lack the opportunity to compare the grave marker with the contents of the tomb of the commemorated individuals, which surely would allow us to appreciate the entire package of messages that a family or a burying group wanted to convey for their loved ones. It has to be stressed that, with the exception of the regular presence of Hermes Chthonios, there are no further iconographic allusions to the afterlife or ideas of immortality, such as those expressed in a handful of Hellenistic stelai, such as that of Hieronymos of Rhodes, or the Apollonia stele.[118] Rather, the iconography shows emphasis on advertising current societal values.

The Evidence from Thessaly: Grave Goods

Considering now the tombs themselves, our appreciation of the burial archaeology of the region is often hindered, because of the nature of exploration, which is predominantly rescue excavations, and the absence of conservation and publication. In cases of better-known necropoleis, such as Pharsalos or

116 Like Nikostrate, in Posidippos' epigram, an 'initiate' of Bacchic mysteries who appeals to the Judges, Radamanthys and Aiakos, to lead her to the house of Hades: Dignas 2004, 181–82. Also Karadima-Matsa and Dimitrova 2003, esp. 341 for the late Hellenistic epigram for an initiate to the Samothracian and Eleusinian mysteries. Kalaitzi 2016b, esp. 508–9, has already discussed this issue and has come to the same conclusion.

117 Chaniotis 2000, 169–70; Chaniotis 2012b, 123–39; Chaniotis 2013, 256; Bernabé 2012, 18–19.

118 Hieronymos relief in Berlin, Antikensammlung SK1888: Pfuhl and Möbius 1979, nr. 1481. Apollonia stele: Ceka in Eggebrecht 1988, 408–9. Also: Kalaitzi 2016a for Macedonia.

Krannon, variability in tomb types is strong.[119] As we have discussed in another study, despite the existence of distinctive local styles and tomb monuments (such as tholos tombs and built chamber tombs with corbelled roofs), monumental tombs or 'rich' grave goods are very few, a feature which at first seems surprising given the proverbial wealth of the Thessalian elites.[120] With regards to the grave goods, the near absence of weapons (contrary to Archaic grave groups) or numerous metal objects (vessels, jewellery) is striking, especially when compared to the late seventh and early sixth century.[121]

A favoured choice throughout Thessaly in Classical and Hellenistic times seems to have been the grouping of a small number of graves, mostly monolithic stone sarcophagi or well-made and occasionally decorated cists, under tumuli. The use of a tumulus for just a few generations and the discovery of burials of both sexes as well as children suggest that they were most likely used by families. Such is the tumulus at the locality Thymarakia, in the virtually unexplored northern cemetery of Pherai, about 1 km from the city. It is situated at a prominent location, by the road to Larisa and on a hill that commands the view to Mt. Ossa and Mt. Pelion and the pass to Pagasai (*Figure 7.8*).[122] It was in use from the fifth to the early second century BCE.[123] Burial was in well-made cists, consisting of monolithic marble slabs; their inner faces were carefully finished and decorated with incised Ionic columns whose capitals were accentuated with red and blue colour.[124] In four graves, dated to the late fifth century BCE, abundant organic material was preserved, offering us a rare glimpse into the furnishings of the tomb, the dress of the deceased and

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119 Stamatopoulou 2016, 184 and 190; Katakouta and Stamatopoulou (forthcoming a); Stamatopoulou and Katakouta 2013, esp. 89–90 (for Pharsalos).

120 Stamatopoulou 2016, 185 and 190–93; Katakouta and Stamatopoulou (forthcoming a).

121 The absence of the 'warrior' element through the deposition of armour in tombs is mirrored on the tombstones of the Classical period, where the depiction of men with weapons is not as frequent as one would have expected: Bosnakis 2013.

122 Adrymi-Sismani 1983; Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou 1994, 79; Arachoviti 1994, 127, fig. 7.1; Stamatopoulou 1999, vol. II, cat. no. 63; idem, 2016, 193, fig. 22. This incidentally is the area where Euripides places the tomb/ *heroon* of Alkestis (vv. 835–36).

123 Although no osteological analysis has been published, the study of the grave goods and dress of the deceased suggest that it was used both for both genders, and adults and children; this and names attested on the tombstones, which were reused to construct a later grave at the site when the tumulus had ceased to be used (in the 2nd c. BCE), imply that the tumulus was a family burial ground. For the tombstones: Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou 2000, 124–27.

124 For a discussion of the architecture of the cist tombs in the mound and its significance: Katakouta and Stamatopoulou (forthcoming a).

food offerings; they are "typical" of affluent tombs in the late Classical and Hellenistic periods.[125] Significant for our discussion is Grave 12 (*Figure 7.9*); it contained the inhumed remains of a girl who had been placed on a mattress of olive branches covered with a woollen cloth. In addition to her dress, the deceased wore a pair of sandals, while another two pairs of shoes and a hat were found in the grave.[126] Near the feet a portion of meat was found.[127] Provision of food is attested in the other contemporary graves from the same tumulus, in particular Graves 14 and 17, as well as in other similar contexts from across Thessaly, from example the Schismeni Magoula tumulus (near the city at Gremnos) dated to the fourth century BCE,[128] and the second-century BCE tumulus in the eastern cemetery of Larisa.[129] The practice of placing more than one pair of shoes in a single burial is also attested in a male grave from the tumulus at Sykeon, in the western Thessalian plain, used from the late fourth century to the mid-third century BCE.[130]

Food remains, usually nuts, grapes and eggs, might have been more common than current evidence suggests,[131] but unlike the lavish pyres of royalty, such as those at Aigai, it is clear that food in our contexts does not allude to a banquet at the grave. It is tempting to see some of the grave gifts, in particular the additional pair(s) of shoes, not merely as indicative of a widespread belief that the dead continued their earthy existence,[132] but instead as catering to the needs of a journey, especially given the regular presence of Hermes Chthonios on Thessalian tombstones.

A different message is conveyed by some *kterismata* from the southern cemetery of Pelinna, found on the cover slabs of the tomb of the woman carrying the ivy-shaped 'Bacchic-Orphic' gold lamellae on her breasts (*Figure 7.10*); among

125 Adrymi-Sismani 1983: Graves 12 and 14 (autumn fruits: chestnuts, a few hazelnut seeds, a pomegranate, a few grape seeds; the pomegranate and the grapes were placed in a black-glaze skyphos, while the others were found by the feet of the deceased), Graves 15 and 17 (a pomegranate and a bunch of grapes placed by the left hand of the female dead).

126 Adrymi-Sismani 1983, 29–31, fig. 7.3, and plan 4 on p. 28. The grave has been dated to the second half of the 5th c. BCE on the basis of a black-glaze salt cellar (Adrymi-Sismani 1983, 31, no. 7). We should note that the age of the girl has not been given.

127 Adrymi-Sismani 1983, 31 no. 9: according to the excavator it belonged to the tibia of a sheep.

128 Milojčić 1956, 170–76 and 189–91; Biesantz 1957; Stamatopoulou 1999, vol. 1, 52, vol. 2, cat. nos. 23 and 57; Katakouta and Stamatopoulou (forthcoming b)

129 Military airport tumulus, Tziafalias 1980, 281–82; Gallis 1982, 60–63.

130 Hatziaggelakis 1999; Stamatopoulou 1999, vol. 1, 31–32, vol. 2, cat. no. 52, pl. 10.

131 For food remains in tombs: Stamatopoulou 1999, vol. 1, 97, 102, n. 486, and 143–44.

132 As Voutiras 2015, 399 aptly points out.



FIGURE 7.8 *View from the Thymarakia tumulus towards the southeast.*
PHOTOGRAPH: M. STAMATOPOULOU.

other objects were two "modest" black-glaze bowls, the surfaces of which had been deliberately scratched after firing on either side to form the shape of an egg (*Figure 7.11*).[133] The presence of the egg motif, a well-known symbol of rebirth, together with the text of the lamellae in the same grave context is quite revealing. In the other Thessalian tomb containing a gold lamella with a secure context, in the eastern cemetery of Pharsalos, the lamella was placed folded inside a bronze hydria that was decorated with a scene of the abduction of Orytheia; the hydria contained the cremated bones of the deceased together with a small drinking cup, a skyphos, which would be appropriate for rituals that the initiates are meant to partake in.[134] Unfortunately not much can be said about the context of the other lamellae, except that they accompanied both cremations and inhumations, of both men and women.

The burial evidence shows that it is exceptionally difficult to identify initiates among the dead; grave goods seem to have been appropriate for the gender and age of the deceased, although less gendered than they had been in the

133 Tziafalias 1992, 133–37, esp. 135–36 and pl. 20.

134 Although we should bear in mind that drinking cups are among the most common grave gifts.

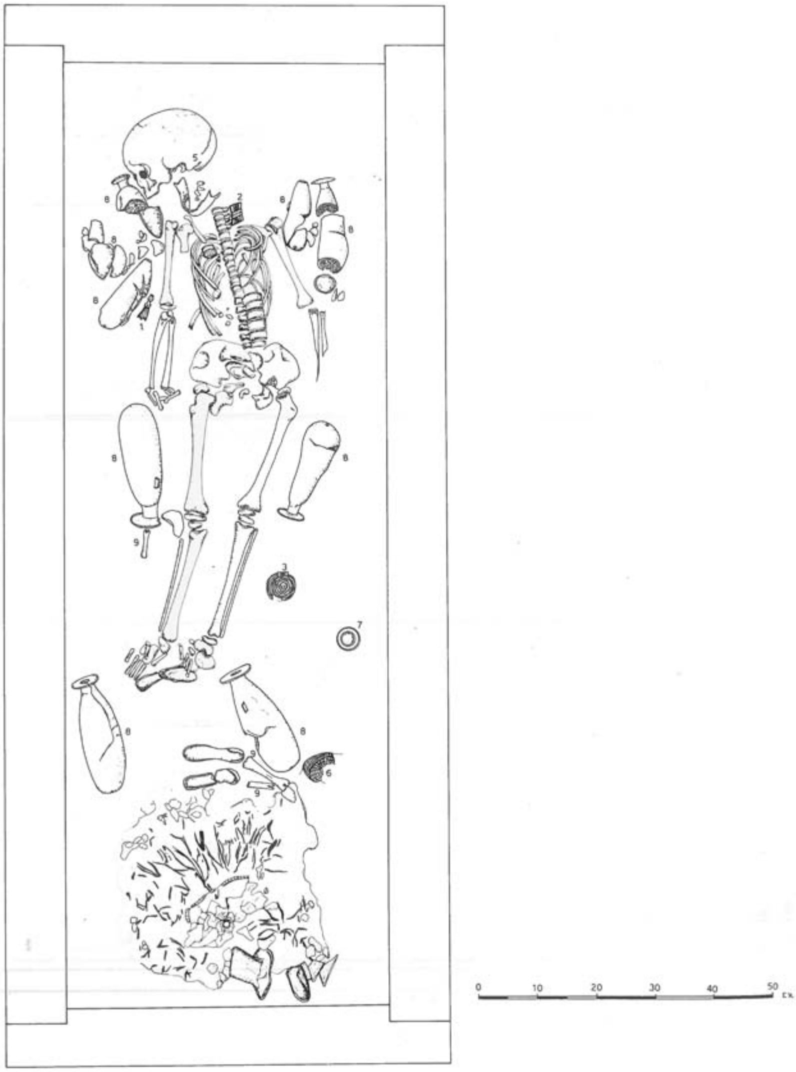


FIGURE 7.9 *Plan of Grave 12 of the Thymarakia tumulus.*
AFTER V. ADRYMI-SISMANI, "Τύμβος, Φερών," ATHENS ANNALS OF ARCHAEOLOGY *16, 1983, 28, PLAN 4.*

Archaic period. In a few cases, the fortunate preservation of organic material or the escape from looters has allowed us to discern a concern with the journey to the Underworld (Pherai, Sykeon), drinking (Pharsalos hydria with lamella), even rebirth and a blessed afterlife (Pelinna tablets, eggs on the cups from the same tomb). The desire to ensure proper provision for the passage/journey to the Underworld dates back to the late fifth century BCE, before the emergence



FIGURE 7.10 *Finds from the cover slab of the cist tomb of the Pelinna tumulus.*
PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF THE EPHORATE OF ANTIQUITIES OF LARISA.



FIGURE 7.11 *Black-glaze bowl with incised egg-motif on the body from the cover slab of the cist tomb of the Pelinna tumulus.*
PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF THE EPHORATE OF ANTIQUITIES OF LARISA.

of the popular motif of Hermes Chthonios on tombstones, whereas clear allusions to rebirth or to a blessed afterlife are a Hellenistic phenomenon, contemporary to the appearance of similar ideas in funerary epigrams.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the discussion of the myth of Alkestis and the reputation of Thessaly as a land of magic and tricks suggests that for the Athenians, and perhaps other Greeks, Thessaly was a land where a successful round trip to

Hades could occur. The evidence from Thessaly itself is meagre by comparison, at least with regards to magic, but this should come as no surprise. Thessaly may not have been a strange place, although the geographical position on the northern margins of the 'Greek' world, the political system of the region, the wealth and conspicuous display of some of its elite families could have seemed alien to Athenians, who had lived under radical democracy. The combined study of texts, epigrams, iconography and tomb contexts suggests a heightened concern in Thessaly about the journey to the Underworld, a safe passage.

But some pieces of the evidence go further. Gold lamellae, especially the Pelinna ones, are a case in point; and epigrams such as that of Archidike, who appeals to the judges for a place among the pious, in the Isles of the Blessed – despite the Homeric overtones of its formulaic poetic language – could be indicative of a belief in a favourable judgment, as a first step towards a bespoke Platonic (?) round trip to Hades.[135]

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135 For differences and assimilations between Plato's eschatology and the Orphic imagery of the Netherworld: Bernabé 2013. For dimensions of individuality in religious practice and philosophical discourse: Waldner 2013; Wypustek 2013, 27–28.

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CHAPTER 8

Round Trip to Hades

Herakles' Advice and Directions

Annie Verbanck-Piérard

Herakles' most famous round trip to Hades is certainly the one where he brought back Kerberos, Hades' guard dog, to the land of the living.* This well-known topic has proved extremely popular throughout history and is well-represented in art and literature, from Archaic Greek vases to the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Even if this journey to the Underworld automatically springs to mind in connection with visits to Hades, this is not the only example of a close association between Herakles and Hades. Among all Greek gods, Herakles probably best illustrates the complexity of the mythical and cultic relationships between the earth, the infernal regions and the celestial sphere. In this study, I will highlight the plurality of circumstances and traditions linking a multiform Herakles to a multiform Hades. This will be done by examining ancient Greek texts and images that concern a journey of Herakles to Hades, including a comment on the cult-related imagery, in particular the extent to which references to Hades appear in the worship of Herakles.

The inclusion of both written and iconographical evidence is not only due to a need for clarity or simplicity. These two categories of sources are autonomous and distinct, and should have equal status for the historian of religions. Most importantly, images are not merely convenient illustrations of texts, but constitute a language of their own and present an independent configuration of the mythical material. Therefore, the discussion of the textual evidence at the beginning of this study does not assume any pre-eminence of the written

* I would like to thank the organizers for their generous invitation and wonderful hospitality in Uppsala. In my opinion, Herakles has been very happy to fully participate in this interesting conference and new round trip to Hades. For photographs and permission to publish, I am grateful to Dr. Natacha Massar, conservatrice des collections grecques au Département Antiquité, Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels; Dr. Katarina Horst, Abteilungsleitung Wissenschaft und Sammlungen, Referatsleitung Antike Kulturen, and Angelika Hildenbrand, Fotoarchiv, Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe; Dr. Soprintendente A. Russo, Dr. A. Argento and the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per l'Area Metropolitana di Roma, la provincia di Viterbo e l'Etruria Meridionale; Jan Van Acker, Inboud Sales Representative, Getty Images Benelux; Marian Maguire, artist, printmaker, Christchurch. Thanks to Sylvain Verbanck and to Alexandre Mitchell for their help.

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tradition over the representations, as Greek visual culture was just as mythopoetic as oral accounts or written literature. The exploration of the subject will hence be adapted to the evidence at hand and it is not up to us to match conflicting or contradictory sources regarding Herakles' identity by force.

The Literary Tradition

From Homer and several epic poems to Archaic lyric, Classical drama, late mythographers and Pausanias, the literary tradition connects Herakles with Hades in different ways, which evolve depending on the historical, social, religious and cultural context. For example, we shall highlight new versions of different mythical episodes presented by Euripides as well as his own perception of Herakles' relation with afterlife. Herakles' round trips as described in Greek literature will be the main topic, but two other themes should first be considered: Herakles' stay in Hades and his fight with Hades.

Homer mentions Herakles' death and his stay in Hades in two passages. In *Iliad* 18.117–19, we find the earliest evocation of Herakles' death, mentioned by Achilles who is mourning Patroklos' demise and regrets his choice of glory over life. Herakles' fate is referred to as a paradigm for Achilles' decision and destiny. In *Odyssey* 11.601–3, Herakles is dwelling among the dead and Odysseus, at the end of his famous *Nekyia*, describes their impressive encounter. However, this particular passage of the *Odyssey* seems to have been contested since the Archaic period, as line 601 was athetized, questioned and corrected by a subsequent version (ll. 602–3) which states that Herakles was actually not present in the Underworld but resided on Olympos, and only his *eidōlon* was among the shadows. A similar emendation is also known for the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 25).[1] Such corrections emphasize Herakles' divinity rather than his mortality.

Interestingly, this notion of a stay in the Underworld, which implies that the hero was dead, was rapidly abandoned. It does not reappear in later literature, where Herakles ends his career on Olympos in a more straightforward manner, just after his last Labours or, in a later tradition, after his death caused by Deianeira's fatal tunic and/or his self-immolation on the pyre. This scenario does not include any transitory stage in Hades.[2] Throughout the first part of Euripides' *Herakles*, Amphitryon, Megara and the chorus lament the terrible fate of Herakles, who went to Hades to fetch Kerberos and is now considered

1 West 1985. For Hesiod, *Theogony* 950–55, see West 1966, 416–19. This addition is supposed to be linked to Peisistratos and Onomakritos in 6th-c. BCE Athens.

2 Shapiro 1983; Verbanck-Piérard 2014.

dead.[3] The audience, however, knows he will soon return to the living.[4] In the *Children of Herakles* (ll. 912–14), Euripides is even more explicit; Herakles escapes the story (*logos*) that "he went down to Hades' halls, his body burnt by the fire's fierce flame".[5] Thus, the older version of the myth to whch Homer seems to allude, the stay in Hades, is curiously an exception.

A more prominent theme is Herakles fighting different characters of the Underworld. A rather strange episode is included in *Iliad* 5.392–404, which relates how Herakles wounded Hades ἐν Πύλῳ.[6] This passage suggests the notion of a combative relationship between Herakles and Hades, and recalls a violent victory of Zeus' son over the god of death. Herakles fighting with Hades is a minor but recurrent theme, as for example in Euripides' *Herakles*, lines 612–13: μάχῃ (for Kerberos). Another significant fight is his struggle with Thanatos, the personification of Death, to save Alkestis. The main source for this Thessalian myth is a tragedy, Euripides' *Alkestis* (staged in 438 BCE), celebrating Admetos' *philoxenia* and piety, as well as Alkestis' love and devotion.[7] The play is very interesting for our purposes, for it is full of allusions to Hades as well as to death and funerary rituals. From the very beginning, Euripides shows us Thanatos, present on the stage, in front of Apollo, who quickly departs. In the second part of the play, Herakles twice mentions his fight with Thanatos (ll. 843–49 and ll. 1140–42), using the words μάχῃ and ἀγῶν. This athletic wrestling does not take place in Hades but near the grave of Alkestis and there is no *katabasis* here.[8] Still, this is the decisive moment when Alkestis, between life and death, is about to be carried to the Underworld. Here, Herakles appears as a saviour god, who manages to rescue Admetos' brave spouse just as she is about to begin her journey to the land of the *nerteroi*: Δεῖ γάρ με σῶσαι τὴν θανοῦσαν ἀρτίως γυναῖκα (ll. 840–41, "for I must save the woman who has just died").[9] In the lines that follow, while waiting for Thanatos near Alkestis' *tymbos*, Herakles is ready again for a successful round trip to Hades: "I shall go down to the sunless house of Persephone and her lord in the world below and shall ask for Alkestis, and I think I shall bring her up" (ll. 851–54: κάτω […], ἄνω: εἶμι τῶν κάτω | Κόρης ἄνακτός τʹ εἰς ἀνηλίους δόμους, | αἰτήσομαί τε

3 Euripides, *Herakles* 145 (Lykos showing Herakles' children: τὸν παρ' Ἅιδῃ πατέρα τῶνδε κείμενον), ll. 245, 262–67, 296–97, 427–29, 516 and 551 (Megara to Herakles: σὲ δὲ θανόντ' ἠκούομεν).

4 Euripides, *Herakles* 514.

5 All translations of *Herakles* by Coleridge 1937.

6 Homer, *Iliad* 11.690–95; Pausanias 6.25.2–3.

7 *LIMC* I, s.v. Alkestis, "Literarische Quellen". See also the article by M. Stamatopoulou and S. Kravaritou in this volume. Cf. Bruit Zaidman 2002.

8 In Apollodoros 1.9.15, Herakles brings Alkestis back from hell and fights with Hades. According to Plato, *Symposium* 179c, the gods agree to her *anabasis* but nothing is said about Herakles' help.

9 All translations of *Alkestis* by Kovacs 1994.

καὶ πέποιθ᾽ ἄξειν ἄνω | Ἄλκηστιν [...]). His role is not unlike that of Asklepios, also mentioned in the play (l. 4 and ll. 121–29), who in contrast was struck down by Zeus for having raised the dead.[10]

Most of the texts relevant for our purpose refer to Herakles' successful descent to Hades to bring back Kerberos or Theseus. Even if other gods or heroes have performed a round trip to the Underworld, Herakles seems to be the only one who successfully completed this amazing journey, even bringing back trophies.[11] As mentioned in the introduction, the best-documented theme is the capture of Kerberos, which is considered to be one of his very last labours.[12] In Homer (*Iliad* 8.366–69, "the hound of Hades", and *Odyssey* 11.623–26) and in later literature, this feat is described as difficult and risky, and set in a very hostile environment. In the literary tradition, Kerberos is most often represented as a terrifying monster, a worthy son of Echidna and Typhon.[13] His dreadful appearance is suggested in different ways, such as multiple heads and snake tail(s). It is mainly for this labour that the help of Athena and Hermes is needed. In some sources, Herakles must forego his usual weapons to capture the animal, which he instead grasps by the throat, trying to strangle him.[14] Several locations have been linked to where Herakles entered or exited the Underworld for this particular endeavour, the best known being Cape Tainaron, and this journey is always characterized as a descent (*katabasis*) to Hades and as a (temporary) disappearance from the human world.[15]

10 His struggle with the triple Geryon is often seen as a representation of the Underworld; see the exhaustive study by Jourdain-Annequin 1989.

11 Hyginus, *Fabulae* 251 (*Qui licentia Parcarum ab Inferis redierunt*) mentions: "Ceres, Pater Liber, Hercules, Asklepios, Castor and Pollux, Protesilaos, Alkestis, Theseus, Hippolytus, Orpheus, Adonis, Glaucus, Ulixes, Aeneas and Mercurius". This list is a catch-all, including cyclic round trips such as the *anodoi* of Demeter or Persephone, Adonis, the alternation of the Dioskouroi, the 'true' *katabaseis* of Herakles and Orpheus, the *nekyiai* of Odysseus and Aeneas, and so forth. Hermes is, with Hekate, the go-between, passing through the gates. On heroic *katabaseis*, see Calvo Martinez 2000 (even if I do not agree with his p. 70: "there is not much to be said about Herakles' *katabasis*"). See also the abstracts from the international conference *Katabasis dans la tradition littéraire et la pensée religieuse de la Grèce* held in Montreal in 2014 (http://katabasis.ca/); Bonnechere & Cursaru 2015; Bonnechere & Cursaru 2016.

12 *LIMC* VI, s.v. Kerberos, and *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, Section M, "Literary sources".

13 Hesiod, *Theogony* 306–12 and 769–73.

14 Apollodoros 2.5.12.

15 For entrances to the Underworld, see the chapter by Friese in this volume. On the descent as a *katabasis*, see Pindar, *Dithyrambs* 2 (fr. 70b Snell-Maehler) entitled *Herakles' katabasis or Kerberos* (the papyrus P. Oxy. 1604 has preserved the title but not the episode itself. *Katabasis* is based on a restitution). Among many other texts, e.g. Euripides, *Herakles* 1101–2 (*katēlthon*).

In Euripides' *Herakles*, the *katabasis* motif not only underlies the plot but also helps to structure the whole play.[16] The Kerberos feat is one of the most popular Labours, that is, the most widespread, being of great symbolic significance and easy to understand, a kind of folk tale.[17] It is often enriched with various other incidents and connected themes, such as a meeting with the soul of Meleager,[18] or the fight with Menoites after sacrificing an ox belonging to Hades.[19]

Aristophanes' *Frogs* (staged in 405 BCE) describes Herakles' extraordinary *katabasis* acted out by Dionysos and Xanthias. Herakles, questioned by Dionysos, gives advice on the path to follow in Hades. His vivid description of the infernal landscape and various recommendations for the trip are terrifying as well as appeasing, for he adds a new conception of Hades to the former epic tradition.[20] Herakles has become a wise man, giving his own instructions for the Netherworld. At the end of the play, Dionysos, who is acting as a new Herakles, truly performs Aeschylus' *anabasis*, for the salvation of Athens.

Freeing Theseus, who was a prisoner in the Underworld, is another theme often associated with the capture of Kerberos.[21] Herakles, using only his strength, manages to wrench both Theseus and Peirithous from the seat of forgetfulness, usually with the consent of the infernal gods.[22] For Euripides, Herakles had to stay in Hades for a long time in order to free Theseus.[23] According to most sources, Peirithous had to remain in Hades, and Apollodoros

16 Mikellidou 2015.

17 Burkert 1985, 209 associates the descent to the world beyond with shamanism.

18 Bacchylides 5.56–92 and 155–75 (written for Hieron I of Syracuse in 476 BCE), where the poet suggests Herakles' future marriage with Deianeira. In this poem, Herakles' *katabasis* journey evolves into a kind of *nekyia*, a discussion with the shades of the dead. A fragment of a lyric poetry in P. Oxy. 2622 (by Pindar?) could also refer to the meeting of Herakles and Meleager in Hades, see Lloyd-Jones 1967.

19 Apollodoros 2.5.12. This text is the most detailed account of Herakles' *katabasis* and falls back on several older poems, cf. Lloyd-Jones 1967, 218–29.

20 See infra.

21 *LIMC* VII, s.v. Theseus, "Literary sources", and *LIMC* VII, s.v. Peirithoös, "Literarische Quellen". Homer, *Odyssey* 11.630–31, knows about their sacrilegious presence in Hades, but not in relation with their liberation by Herakles. According to Pausanias 10.28.2, the epic poem entitled the *Minyad* already mentioned this episode, which is also attested in Panyassis' late epic poem *Herakleia*.

22 The seat of forgetfulness is mentioned in Apollodoros, *Bibliotheka Epitome* 1.24. For the consent of the infernal gods, see Diodoros of Sicily 4.26.1.

23 Euripides, *Herakles* 619: Θησέα κομίζων ἐχρόνισ' ἐξ Ἅιδου. This reorganization of the mythical time allows the author to structure his play in a very original way.

even states that, when Herakles tried to release the hero, the ground started to shake, signalling a major shift in the world order.[24]

The earliest and most beautiful literary rendition of this episode is found in Euripides' *Herakles* (probably staged in 416).[25] The play is full of twists that create a sense of suspense and imminent disaster. At the turning point of the tragedy (from l. 514), Herakles miraculously returns as a *deus ex machina* to save his family from death and to kill the cruel and dictatorial King Lykos. However, there is no happy ending. In a terrible irony, Herakles is struck by madness, Lyssa, and kills his own wife and children. His morbid sleep is a virtual death. He is somehow immersed again in Hades. He needs a symbolic return to life and a re-integration into another city. From line 1163, Theseus, whom Herakles has just released from the Underworld, comes on stage to save his friend's life and in order to fulfil his debt brings him back to Athens. The last part of the play, through Theseus' intervention, is linked to Herakles' important presence in Attica and in particular the strong evidence of his worship in the region. Indeed, Herakles' cult is much older and more important than Theseus' in Attica.[26] Like Euripides' *Alkestis*, *Herakles*, which is also an aetiological play, gives many clues to understanding Herakles' role as saviour god after returning from Hades. Megara even compares him with Zeus Soter, "for here is one to help you, not at all behind our savior Zeus" (ll. 521–22: ἐπεὶ Διὸς | σωτῆρος ὑμῖν οὐδέν ἐσθ᾽ ὅδ᾽ ὕστερος), and Theseus insists on his exceptional salvation: "I came making recompense for the former kindness of Herakles in saving me from the world below" (ll. 1169–70: τίνων δ᾽ ἀμοιβὰς ὧν ὑπῆρξεν Ἡρακλῆς | σώσας με νέρθεν, ἦλθον) or "when you brought me safe from the dead to the light of life" (l. 1222: ὅτ᾽ ἐξέσῳσάς μ᾽ ἐς φάος νεκρῶν πάρα).

The question is if Herakles could get away with anything in the Underworld. The answer seems to be that he holds the manual, namely Eleusinian initiation. This is already mentioned in Euripides' *Herakles* as a prerequisite for capturing Kerberos: "for I had been lucky enough to witness the rites of the initiated" (l. 613: τὰ μυστῶν δ᾽ ὄργι᾽ εὐτύχησ᾽ ἰδών), and it is well documented before and after this play.[27] Herakles' initiation was clearly a major source

24 Apollodoros 2.5.12; Plutarch, *Life of Theseus* 35.1.

25 Euripides, *Herakles* esp. 618–19, 1150–70 and 1222. Euripides also wrote a lost play entitled *Peirithous*.

26 Verbanck-Piérard 1995.

27 This tradition seems to date back to the 6th c. BCE. Pindar, fr. 346c; [Plato] *Axiochus* 371E; Diodoros of Sicily 4.25–26; Apollodoros 2.5.12; Plutarch, *Life of Theseus* 33.2; Scholia to Aristophanes, *Plutus* 845. Important discussion in Lloyd-Jones 1967, Boardman 1975, van Straten 1975, Robertson 1980 (who suggests the influence of the lost epic poem *Aigimios*) and Suárez de la Torre 1992.

of pride for the city of Athens.[28] Some sources to this event are difficult to interpret and a full discussion lies beyond the scope of this paper, especially concerning the relation between Eleusinian and Orphic elements. In any case, Herakles was considered the first non-Athenian to be initiated into the Mysteries of Eleusis. The story is twofold, since a preliminary initiation at the Lesser Mysteries was requested for him in the sanctuary of Meter at Agra near Athens.[29] In a sense, the figure of Herakles embodies the eschatological message of Eleusis, the conquest over death and promise of rebirth, a hope based on the cycles of the growth of grain. The Eleusinian initiation also underlies the narrative of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where a remarkable chorus of initiates sings about the beautiful mysteries, even if Herakles does not seem to have joined the party.[30] Indeed, no text seems to present Herakles' happiness as an initiate in the Underworld; during his afterlife, he joyfully dwells on Olympos.[31]

Imagery

Greek iconography of the Underworld offers rather different representations than the terrifying Homeric ones, instead providing a sort of display of the Underworld. The stay of the souls in Hades is seldom shown, but provides a framework to particular mythological circumstances, like the *Nekyia* or some infernal punishments resulting from hubristic behaviour or major sacrilegious offences. Images of the Underworld are there to visualize the invisible, one could even say the unthinkable, as if they offered the viewer to undertake a safe *katabasis*. As always in Greek representations, there is little evidence of landscape and topography: a few plants, some rocks, as well as columns and an architrave indicating the palace of Hades.[32] Scenes of the Underworld are mainly centred on its inhabitants, such as the sovereigns or the damned, or on heroes passing through. Herakles is one of the most important witnesses of the infernal regions.

Herakles' stay in Hades, or fighting with Death. There are no representations of the stay of Herakles in the Underworld in the sense of him being dead. He

28 See for instance Xenophon, *Hellenica* 6.3.6.

29 According to Diodoros of Sicily (4.14.3) "Demeter instituted the Lesser Mysteries in honour of Herakles, so that she might purify him of the guilt he had incurred in the slaughter of the Centaurs" (trans. Oldfather).

30 Ll. 154–63 for Herakles' description of the initiates.

31 *Homeric Hymn* 15, *To Herakles*, 8.

32 See Felten 1975, Lochin 2010 and Cousin 2012.

is not mentioned in Pausanias' description of Polygnotos' *Nekyia* in the *leschē* of the Knidians in Delphi.[33] In visual terms, he is never shown as one of the souls forever residing in Hades, nor as one of the damned. Similarly, the fight against Hades before Pylos is hardly attested in Greek imagery. It is more surprising that there are no certain depictions of Herakles' fight with Thanatos in connection with the return of Alkestis.[34] This victory over Death should be easy to represent, one would assume. Still, the visual impact of theatre must be considered. Through Euripides' *Alkestis*, the iconography of Thanatos and of Admetos' faithful wife recovering from death also becomes part of Athenian visual culture, even if the struggle between Herakles and Thanatos is not explicitly shown, just narrated. But even after Euripides' play, there is no tradition in vase painting or sculpture for this Thessalian folk tale that reflects an inspiration from tragedy.

Even if this study is restricted to Greek iconography, it is important to remember that the striking and moving theme of Alkestis' *anabasis* with Herakles became very popular in Roman times, especially on sarcophagi, where the return of Alkestis evokes the victory of love over death and the promise of rebirth. Alkestis' salvation is found also in the catacombs, including the famous frescoes of the Via Latina,[35] which represent a powerful and symbolic imagery of Herakles as a saviour and *psychagōgos* to the world of the living, a kind of successful counterpoint to Orpheus. Again, it is difficult to understand why this successful rescue mission, one of the few happy endings among all the other rescue attempts, has no previous Greek iconography.[36]

Herakles' katabasis/anabasis for Kerberos. The earliest images concerning Herakles' *katabasis* mainly show Kerberos, just as this topic is mentioned in the earliest literary tradition, in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.[37] The iconography of this Labour is particularly prominent in Attic black-figure vases (6th c. BCE – beginning of the 5th c. BCE), in Apulian red-figure (second half of

33 Pausanias 10.28.1–8, Felten 1975, 65–85, Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990 and Cousin 2000.

34 *LIMC* I, s.v. Alkestis (no. 61 is questionable).

35 *LIMC* I, s.v. Alkestis, no. 24.

36 A black figure amphora by the Swing Painter has been interpreted as a representation of Alkestis' return (see *LIMC* I, s.v. Alkestis, no. 58), but it is an enigmatic scene as the woman could be Persephone and she is not following Herakles. In black figure scenes, representations of Alkestis are linked to her wedding with Admetos. Uncertain identification for the reliefs *LIMC* I, s.v. Alkestis, nos. 17 and 61. For the Apulian oinochoe *LIMC* I, s.v. Alkestis, no. 18, see Morard 2009, 114–16. The scene could show Medea at Eleusis and not Alkestis and her children.

37 *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, nos. 2553–27, and *LIMC* VI, s.v. Kerberos.

the 4th c. BCE) and again in Roman times. Of interest here are the Attic and Apulian representations.

In Attic art, Kerberos is two-headed and less dreadful. Black-figure vases displaying this scene are found in great numbers, especially from important workshops of the last third of the sixth century BCE, such as the Antimenes Painter and his circle or the Leagros Group. This rich corpus reveals variations on the subject as well as an evolution in the visual conception of Kerberos. Two stock images, *schemata*, appear on the Attic vases, one in motion and the other static.

The scenes in motion are the oldest. Here, Herakles pulls a captured Kerberos out of the Underworld with the help of a big chain. He is obviously on the way back from Hades and he can lead the dog or even drive Kerberos before him, raising his club over his head. The Underworld landscape is barely hinted at, usually by the presence of the divine couple Persephone and Hades or sometimes by a column or portico to suggest their palace, as well as to structure the scene as set inside or outside of Hades. Overall, this is a very minimalist vision of the Underworld, which is hardly scary. With the exception of the oldest vase scenes, Persephone and Hades seem to approve of Herakles' departure.[38]

Hermes, the god of journeys and divine *psychopompos*, is usually present and sometimes Athena assists Herakles. This journey may contain joyful aspects.[39] We can notice the images of Herakles easily coming back with a quiet Kerberos, who looks very happy to visit the upper world, on his way to Eurystheus. These vases present a scheme which is not an *anodos* but something I would like to call 'The Walk' (*Figure 8.1*).[40] The fact that the direction of the movement is horizontal is important for the understanding of these representations. The Underworld lies at the end of the world travelled by Herakles and the land of the dead is often associated with the Extreme West.[41] Visually, this is therefore not yet a *katabasis* nor an *anabasis*, but a linear passage as in a frieze. In the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, this horizontal movement is also used for Heraklean scenes of *apotheosis*, considered as a journey and not as a radical transformation.[42]

In the second quarter of the fifth century, under the influence of Polygnotos of Thasos, there is a change in the conception of space in painting. For our

38 On a Corinthian vase from the beginning of the 6th c. BCE, Hades is threatened by Herakles, see *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 2553 and *LIMC* VI, s.v. Kerberos, no. 1.

39 See also the famous Caeretan hydria in Paris, Louvre E 701 where Herakles has just brought a very colourful three-headed Kerberos to Eurystheus who is hiding in a pithos (*LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 2616).

40 *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, nos. 2596 and 2609.

41 Jourdain-Annequin 1989.

42 Verbanck-Piérard 2014.



FIGURE 8.1 *Attic black-figure neck-amphora, c. 520 BCE. Brussels, Royal Museums of Art and History, inv. R 300. Attributed to the Circle of the Antimenes Painter (Group of Würzburg 199).*
SOURCE: © MUSÉES ROYAUX D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE DE BRUXELLES.

purposes, Polygnotos is particularly relevant because the painter apparently created a spectacular and pioneering vision of the Underworld for his *Nekyia* in Delphi.[43] His new interest in perspective is reflected in other arts as well. In vase painting, an echo is noticeable on some contemporary vessels. The body of the vase, which until then was decorated by one or several horizontal friezes, now presents a new reading axis, a *vertical* one, which corresponds to the cosmic order in Greek mind and where the lower part of the vessel can be seen as the Underworld. Examples are relatively rare and centre on Amphiaraos, Gē and the *anodoi* of Persephone or Aphrodite. For Kerberos, the most obvious example of this trend is found in sculpture, on a metope from the temple of Zeus at Olympia (c. 460 BCE), where Kerberos is shown as coming out of the ground, from the lower right corner of the scene.[44]

The second, more static, piece of stock imagery appears in the last third of the sixth century BCE. It shows a face-to-face between Herakles and the feral dog.[45] This is a scene of taming and domestication, which requires particular technical skills. It usually takes place in the presence of the cunning Hermes and of Athena, whose help and *metis* are very useful. Herakles' gestures are cautious and methodical, and he is probably using his voice as well. He shows qualities that we would think incompatible with Heraklean behaviour, such as patience, self-control and temperance. This iconography belongs to a new conception of Herakles, appearing in the last third of the sixth century BCE in Athens, in addition to the standard pictures of his hard labours and hubristic victories. From this point on, Herakles can be shown as a more peaceful and divine figure, playing the kithara, shaking hands with Pholos or in dialogue with Athena.[46] Moreover, representations of the taming of Kerberos refer more generally to the relationship between humans and animals, suggesting that Herakles was the *protos heurētēs*, the first inventor, of the domestication of the dog, an animal that, just like the wolf, is linked to ferocity, savagery and the Underworld. Here, Herakles has become a master of animals.

Moreover, these Athenian vases with Kerberos scenes could give a glimpse of the Etruscan perception of the Underworld. Indeed, for the most part, the Attic ceramic production of the sixth and fifth centuries BCE has been found in Etruria and the reception of Greek images abroad has been a focus for scholarly debate.[47] One interesting example of a coherent link between

43 See supra.

44 *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 2591.

45 Chazalon 1995. *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, nos. 2554–68, uses the word "confrontation".

46 Verbanck-Piérard 2006.

47 Reusser 2002.



FIGURE 8.2A *Vulci, Necropoli dell'Osteria. 'Tomba A9/1998 del Kottabos' during the excavation.*
SOURCE: © SU CONCESSIONE DEL MINISTERO DEI BENI E DELLE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI E DEL TURISMO – SOPRINTENDENZA ARCHEOLOGIA, BELLE ARTI E PAESAGGIO PER L'AREA METROPOLITANA DI ROMA, LA PROVINCIA DI VITERBO E L'ETRURIA MERIDIONALE.

Attic painting and Etruscan culture comes from the Tomba del Kottabos in the Necropoli dell'Osteria at Vulci, where two remarkable black figure vases were found among other Greek and Etruscan pieces (*Figure 8.2a–c*).[48] On a hydria attributed to the Priam Painter, Herakles is taking care of Kerberos without violence (he seems to put on a leash), although he brandishes his club. To the right of the centrally placed Herakles, Hades and Persephone are sitting in their palace and the goddess makes a propitiatory gesture towards the dog. To the left, Athena is ostensibly extending her aegis to protect and celebrate Herakles. On an amphora by the Leagros Group, a huge Kerberos is in the centre of the scene, ready to follow Hermes but still turning his heads towards Hades. Persephone and Herakles do not assist in this departure. Different moments seem to be referred to on the two complementary vases: the capture

48 Moretti Sgubini 2001, 220–21 and 230–39 (cat. III.B.7.1, hydria; cat. III.B.7.2, amphora).



FIGURE 8.2B *Attic black-figure hydria, c. 510 BCE. Rome, Museo di Villa Giulia, inv. 131422. Attributed to the Priam Painter.*
SOURCE: © SU CONCESSIONE DEL MINISTERO DEI BENI E DELLE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI E DEL TURISMO – SOPRINTENDENZA ARCHEOLOGIA, BELLE ARTI E PAESAGGIO PER L'AREA METROPOLITANA DI ROMA, LA PROVINCIA DI VITERBO E L'ETRURIA MERIDIONALE.



FIGURE 8.2C *Attic black-figure neck-amphora, c. 510–500 BCE. Rome, Museo di Villa Giulia, inv. 131423. Attributed to the Leagros Group.*
SOURCE: © SU CONCESSIONE DEL MINISTERO DEI BENI E DELLE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI E DEL TURISMO – SOPRINTENDENZA ARCHEOLOGIA, BELLE ARTI E PAESAGGIO PER L'AREA METROPOLITANA DI ROMA, LA PROVINCIA DI VITERBO E L'ETRURIA MERIDIONALE.

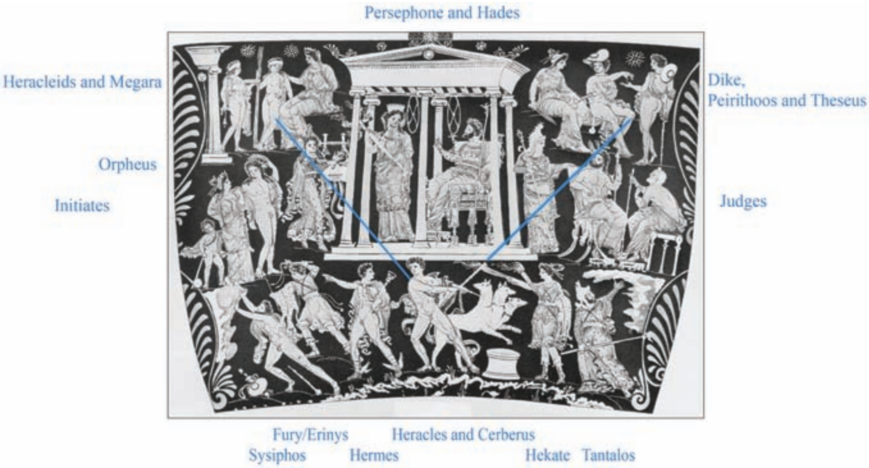


FIGURE 8.3 *Apulian red-figure volute-krater, 330–320 BCE. Munich, Antikensammlung, inv. 3297. Attributed to the Underworld Painter.*
FROM A. FURTWÄNGLER AND K. REICHHOLD, *GRIECHISCHE VASENMALEREI*, VOL. 1, MUNICH 1900, PL. 10 (WITH HIGHLIGHTED BLUE LINES AND TEXT BY A. & S. VERBANCK).

of Kerberos on the hydria and the departure to and/or return from Hades on the amphora. This combination of two motifs suggests that the Etruscan users may have had their own interpretations of Herakles' round trip to Hades.

Although the most famous representation of Herakles and Kerberos, the beautiful amphora by the Andokides Painter in the Louvre with a taming scene, is a red-figure vase,[49] the iconography of this penultimate or last Labour disappears on the red-figure vases after 460 BCE, even in its more peaceful versions. This change in the popularity of a motif is not specific to the Kerberos myth; in the Classical period, the traditional sixth century heroic iconography gradually falls out of fashion among the painters and their public. Furthermore, the lack of interest in the Kerberos imagery indicates that the concept of Herakles' round trip to Hades changed profoundly in Attica, as we will see in the last part of this paper.

However, representations of Herakles and Kerberos also spread to South Italy, where they recur on Apulian vases of the second half of the fourth century BCE, usually as a part of monumental depictions of the Underworld. The best-known piece is the volute-krater in Munich (*Figure 8.3*),[50] the name vase of the Underworld Painter, but kraters in Karlsruhe (*Figure 8.4*) and Naples

49 Paris, Louvre F 204, c. 520–10 BCE; *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 2554.

50 Munich, Antikensammlung. 3297 (J 849), *RVAp* II, p. 533, 282, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, under no. 2571.



FIGURE 8.4 *Apulian red-figure volute-krater, 350–340 BCE. Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum, inv. B4. Attributed to the Circle of the Lycurgus Painter.*
SOURCE: © BADISCHES LANDESMUSEUM KARLSRUHE, PHOTOGRAPH: THOMAS GOLDSCHMIDT.

bearing the same motif are awesome and inspiring too.[51] These very crowded Underworld scenes, by painters belonging to the Lycurgus and Darius Painters' workshops, or by the later Underworld Painter, have been studied repeatedly, in order to better understand ancient beliefs concerning the afterlife.[52] In the South Italian scenes, references to mysteries, either the Eleusinian, Dionysiac or Orphic, have been traced, a complex issue that cannot be further discussed here.[53]

These images depict an impressive and complex vision of the Underworld, and offer a veritable construction of the infernal landscape presenting all its inhabitants, placed around the palace of Hades and Persephone. There is much to gather from the spatial arrangement of the various characters on the Underworld krater in Munich, in particular the contrasting locations, left or right, above or below (see *Figure 8.3*).[54] While Orpheus uses his musical gifts to charm the infernal gods in order to get the permission to cross the border between the living and the dead, Herakles shows his strength and fortitude when dragging away the three-headed Kerberos. Herakles is truly an integral part of the imaginary vision of the Underworld and his key role is to embody the hope of successfully crossing the gates into Hades for the deceased and back and forth for himself. With his vigorous body in frontal view, he is clearly visible in the centre of the lower register. This is an important and obvious placement, just below the rulers, and this particular area, near the infernal waters, is reserved for him also in other representations. His diverging motion is dynamic and striking, as if he is about to rush out to meet the viewer. Moreover, his posture marks the meeting point of two oblique axes running towards the upper parts of the composition (see *Figure 8.3*). On the left, he is linked with his wife Megara and their children, a personification of *mors immatura*,[55] and on the right, with

51 Volute-kraters, Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum B4, *RVAp* I, p. 431, 81, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 2571; very close: Naples, Museo Nazionale 81666 (H 3222), much restored, *RVAp* I, p. 431, 82, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, under no. 2571. See also Naples, Museo Nazionale 80854 (SA 11), *RVAp* I, p. 424, 54, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, under no. 2571; Naples, Museo Nazionale, SA 709, *RVAp* II, p. 533, 284, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 2572. Amphora in Taranto, Museo Nazionale 76.010, *RVAp* II, p. 763, 293, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, under no. 2571. See also Vollkommer 1988, 15–16; Moret 1993 and Aellen 1994, cat. 2, 27, 28, 50 and 78.

52 A few of these vases do not include the Herakles and Kerberos group.

53 Among many other references, see Borgeaud 1991.

54 Moret 1993 and Morard 2009. In Apulian vase painting, the Underworld has become a kind of marshalling yard, where each deceased will find his rightful place, according to his previous life and beliefs.

55 *LIMC* IV, s.v. Herakleidai, nos. 10–16 (nos. 10–13 with Herakles).

two transgressors, Theseus, whom he will soon set free, and Peirithous.[56] In his own lower register, Herakles is surrounded by Hermes showing the way and supporting him, and by a goddess with torches, interpreted as Hekate, a Fury or an Erinys,[57] or a gatekeeper of Hades. Her action is important here: now that Kerberos is away, entering and leaving the Underworld will be easier, thanks to Herakles.[58]

Once more, we must not lose sight of the spectators, for it was not only a Greek, Tarentine audience but also the Daunian indigenous elite, who adopted this vision of the Greek Underworld by placing these monumental vases in their hypogea, especially during the last third of the fourth century BCE.[59] When the deceased was laid out in *prothesis* with all his grave goods, such as arms, local vases and other offerings, these complex scenes may have given rise to occasions for telling stories. The figurative organization of Underworld myths may have had a didactic function and played an important role in transmitting Greek concepts and scenographies to Italian cultures.

Theseus and Peirithous. Herakles freeing Theseus is rarely represented, even if the motif is already known in the middle of the sixth century BCE from a bronze shield band found in Olympia (c. 560 BCE), where the protagonists are identified by inscriptions (*Figure 8.5*).[60] In the first half of the fifth century BCE, a few renowned Attic vases present this particular scene. On a beautiful red-figure *lekythos* in Berlin, dating from 460 BCE, Herakles shakes the outstretched hand of a bearded man sitting on a rock and helps him to his feet by pulling him up.[61] The man seated on the stone wears a *petasos*, identifying him as a traveller, but it is unclear if he is to be recognized as Theseus or Peirithous. If he is Theseus, the picture makes clear that the most important Attic hero owes his salvation to Herakles. In any case, this image is a demonstration of strength and trust, and we are witnessing a remarkable feat of Herakles as a saviour and redeemer.

On an impressive Classic kalyx-krater now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the upper row of face A shows Herakles in front of the two seated friends dressed in traveller's or ephebic outfits, located between Hades and

56 As on Naples, Museo Nazionale SA 709, *RVAp* II, p. 533, 284, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 2572.

57 "Furie" according to the definition by Aellen 1994, 24.

58 Zografou 2010, 279–83.

59 Pouzadoux 2013.

60 *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 3519. On the topic see also Felten 1975, 46–64. *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, nos. 3515–20. Vollkommer 1988, 23–24.

61 Berlin, Antikensammlung 30035, Alkimachos Painter, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 3515. See also *LIMC* VII, s.v. Peirithoös.



FIGURE 8.5 *Bronze shield band relief, 575–560 BCE. Olympia, Museum.*
FROM E. KUNZE, *ARCHAISCHE SCHILDBÄNDER*, BERLIN 1950, 112, BEIL. 7, 4.

Hermes.[62] Meleager stands to their right. This very calm and paratactic composition continues on the other side with men and a woman standing in front of Persephone who is seated in her palace. The painter has created an exceptionally elaborate picture of the Underworld by combining different elements: Herakles' *katabasis* for rescuing Theseus; a meeting or arrival of the deceased in Hades, but without the usual sinners; and a kind of mound as a communication channel, represented on the left of the frieze, behind Hades, above the left handle. There is no sign of any fear or terror here, instead the emphasis lies on the idea of passing into another world and being welcome. Finally, before leaving the Attic red-figure vases, we must briefly consider the famous Niobid krater in the Louvre, with the enigmatic group of heroes or warriors set around Herakles and Athena.[63] One of the main interpretations of the meaning of the image is the episode of Herakles descending into Hades to rescue Theseus and Peirithous. However, Martine Denoyelle has demonstrated

62 New York, Metropolitan Museum 08.258.21, name vase of the Nekyia Painter, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 3516.

63 Paris, Louvre G 341, name vase of the Niobid Painter, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 3520 (uncertain).

that the composition rather refers to the warriors of Marathon gathered around the statue of Herakles as their patron and god.[64]

As we have seen above, we also find the Theseus-Peirithous duo on a few large-scale representations of the Underworld on South Italian vases. The pair is associated with Herakles, but mostly shown because due to Peirithous' sacrilege. On the Munich krater (see *Figure 8.3*, upper right of the drawing), *Dike* is figured near the unwise and rash ephebes.[65] Another important piece of evidence is the three-figured relief from the Torlonia Museum in Rome, which could be a Roman copy of an original Attic relief of c. 420 BCE.[66] The panel shows the sorrowful moment of parting, when Theseus is about to return with the help of Herakles to the upper world, while Peirithous has to remain for the rest of time bound to a rock in Hades. It belongs to a series of four reliefs, previously supposed to have decorated the Altar of the Twelve Gods in the Athenian Agora or a funerary monument.[67] The three other reliefs render Orpheus and Eurydike, Medea and the Peliads, and Herakles with the Hesperides: various myths linked with the theme of pity and with death, immortality and salvation. According to recent scholarship, these reliefs could be of a later date and a Neo-Attic creation with a Classical literary inspiration has been suggested.[68] Overall, Herakles freeing Theseus is a rare, but explicit, iconography.

Herakles, Hades and the cornucopiae. On a famous and often discussed amphora fragment in Reggio in the manner of Exekias, found in a grave in Locri, two scenes centre on Herakles.[69] On the shoulder, he takes Kerberos out of Hades while in the main scene, Herakles accompanies a procession of Demeter mounting a chariot moving towards the figure of Ploutodotas (name inscribed).[70] This scene is intriguing and the question is if Herakles is accompanying Demeter to the Underworld, to Olympos, to Eleusis or to Athens,

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64 Denoyelle 1997, with a study of all the previous interpretations, e.g. that of E. Simon (Herakles, Theseus and Peirithous).

65 Aellen 1994, 62–66.

66 *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 3518 (other copies in Berlin, Antikensammlung, and Paris, Louvre).

67 Thompson 1952.

68 Nulton 2009.

69 Reggio, Museo Nazionale 4001, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 2592; Shapiro 1989, 78–80. The same combination of Demeter's departure on a chariot and Herakles with Kerberos is found on a hydria by the Antimenes Painter in Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum L 308, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 2593.

70 *LIMC* VII, s.v. Ploutodotas, no. 1. This figure has been identified as Hades, Plouton, Zeus, Dionysos or as a specific god linked with Demeter.

and what place is symbolized by the presence of Ploutodotas. This name has prompted many commentators to see in this scene an allusion to the founding of the Lesser Mysteries for Herakles at Agra, in the suburbs of Athens.[71]

The iconography of Herakles as the First-initiate (*protomystēs*) is prominent on Attic vases in the second half of the fifth century and in the fourth century BCE, and has been well studied.[72] One particular aspect should be emphasized, the combination of Herakles with the cornucopia (or *cornu copiae*), a major symbol for a number of deities, linked to prosperity *both* on earth and in the Underworld, ensuring the union of what is above ground with the chthonian down below.[73] In the mythological tradition, Herakles has a special connection with the horn of plenty, which is a trophy from his victory over the river-god Achelous in the struggle for Deianeira, although the images discussed here do not explicitly refer to this episode.[74]

On some vases, Herakles is in the presence of a god bearing a cornucopia, for example on an early Classic red-figured skyphos and on a later bell-krater now in Benevent.[75] On both vases, a *dexiosis* between the two figures proves their strong relationship. The cornucopia implies that the god is a fertility deity, whether his name is Hades, Plouton, Hades-Plouton, the Eleusinian Hades, or even Zeus Chthonios or Meilichios. On a fragmentary bell-krater on Samos and a bell-krater in Madrid (both from the beginning of the 4th c. BCE), Herakles is seated in the middle of the composition, surrounded by Athena, Nike, a young man, a satyr, and a white-haired god with a cornucopia: again a Hades-like figure.[76] What is important to note here, is the reference to the setting as a *temenos* by the inclusion of a base and columns. On a Campanian bell-krater, Hades is almost certainly the seated god with sceptre and horn of plenty, since

71 Shapiro 1989, 69–71.

72 Most famous: the Pourtalès krater in London, Brittish Museum F 68, the pelike in St Petersburg, Hermitage St. 1792, the relief hydria (the so-called *Regina Vasorum*) in St Petersburg, Hermitage 51659, etc. *LIMC* IV, s.v. Herakles, nos. 1401–10. See Metzger 1951, 244–61, Vollkommer 1988, 41–43, Clinton 1992, Cohen 2006, 115, fig. 9 and 320, fig. 8.1.

73 *LIMC* VIII, s.v. Cornu copiae, for personifications of Earth (Ge), the child Ploutos, Demeter, Tyche, Plouton, Hades, Herakles and river-gods, see Bemmann 1994 and Burton 2011.

74 Apollodoros 2.7.5. Achelous' horn or Amalthea's horn (in exchange of Achelous' horn).

75 Skyphos, Basel Market, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 3488; Benevent, Museo del Sannio 635, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 3489, and *LIMC* IV, s.v. Hades, no. 68.

76 Samos Museum, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 3491, *LIMC* IV, s.v. Hades, no. 69; Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional 11017, L.224, Oinomaos Painter, 400–370 BCE, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 3492 (and see also *LIMC* VI, s.v. Melikertes, no. 58).

Persephone wearing a *polos* stands behind him.[77] Herakles is positioned in front of the rulers of the Underworld and seems to take or partake of the horn.

It is also worth mentioning a peculiar and rare iconography from the late red figure period: Herakles as a ferryman carrying on his back a god holding a cornucopia.[78] This enigmatic figure has been interpreted as Hades or Plouton, but another hypothesis would be to here see Melikertes-Palaimon, whom Herakles saved from drowning, although Ino's son is usually depicted as a child.[79] These images bearing no inscriptions have not been connected to any known text, but they are brimming with mythical and religious meaning. In a sense, this is a kind of marine *anabasis*: Herakles' feet are not visible, as if they were still in water, and Hermes is there. The sea, or river, is here possibly an alternative Underworld.[80]

Another set of images shows Herakles himself as a bearer of cornucopia, starting at least at the end of the sixth century BCE, with a black-figured skyphos by the Theseus Painter.[81] On fourth-century kraters, very similar to those just mentioned above (same date and workshops), Herakles appears as a central deity surrounded by various symbols of happiness and Dionysiac revelry. The presence of a flaming altar (*bomos*) on a bell-krater by the Erbach Painter suggests a setting in a sanctuary.[82] On the Kanellopoulos krater (*Figure 8.6*), the atmosphere is very peaceful and the goddess on the left could allude to an Eleusinian context.[83] The reverse side of the famous Pourtalès vase in

77 Windsor, Eton College, Plouton Painter, c. 340–30, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 3494, and *LIMC* IV, s.v. Hades, no. 73. The goddess is to be identified as Persephone and not as Ino/Leukothea as in *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 3494.

78 Berlin, Antikensammlung 31094, bell-krater "Champernowne", Pourtalès Painter. The god is white-haired and the cornucopia is white and shiny yellow (for technical aspects of added colours, see Cohen 2006, 331–33). See also two cups by the Jena Painter workshop, Paris, Cabinet des Médailles 882, and fragments of a cup once in Weimar, Preller Collection (the cornucopia not preserved and the god has a sceptre or a thyrsus); Metzger 1951, 196–202 (Plouton; Dionysos). *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, nos. 3496–97, and *LIMC* IV, s.v. Hades, nos. 71, 71a and 71b.

79 *LIMC* IV, s.v. Hades, no. 71, and *LIMC* VI, s.v. Melikertes, nos. 52–54. See infra.

80 See Theseus' descent in the sea to recover his divine father's ring. On a famous red-figured cup in Paris, Louvre G 104 by Euphronios and Onesimos, 500–490 BCE, Theseus receives a crown from Amphitrite.

81 New York Market: Herakles is feasting with Hermes, *LIMC* IV, s.v. Herakles, no. 1498.

82 Ex Nostell Priory, ex private collection in Japan, now New York Market, Sotheby's New York, sale 4 Nov. 2014, n° 17 (400–380 BCE), *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 3222, and *LIMC* VIII, s.v. Cornu copiae, no. 3; Apollo is on the right of the scene.

83 Athens, Kanellopoulos Museum 188, attributed to the Jena Painter, *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 3490.



FIGURE 8.6 *Attic red-figure bell-krater, c. 380 BCE. Athens, Kanellopoulos Museum, 188. Attributed to the Manner of the Jena Painter.*
SOURCE: © DEA/G. DAGLI ORTI – GETTY IMAGES.

London depicts Dionysos feasting on a couch near a young man who could be Herakles, although without any attribute except the cornucopia.[84]

These images have a generic meaning and this is why I do not agree with the systematic identification of the divine holder of the sacred horn, or of the partner of Herakles bearing a cornucopia, as Palaimon-Melikertes,[85] whose name

84 London, British Museum F 68, bell-krater by the Pourtalès Painter, with Herakles as initiate on side A, *LIMC* IV, s.v. Herakles, no. 1508. Other suggested readings: a young Plouton or Ploutos, see *LIMC* VII, s.v. Ploutos, no. 18.

85 As in *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, nos. 3488–97, and *LIMC* VI, s.v. Melikertes, nos. 52–61. Vollkommer 1988, 43–45.

appears on a few inscriptions discovered in a little sanctuary of Herakles-Pankrates near the river Ilissos in Athens, as we will see in the last part of this article.[86] Indeed, the relation between Herakles and the cornucopia is older than the foundation of this shrine. Moreover, our vases belong to a larger iconographical corpus, where Herakles is shown as a god of abundance and prosperity, sometimes sitting in his four-column Herakleion. The satyrs and other gods who surround him do not fit the cults attested in the Ilissos sanctuary, but belong to the usual 'court' scenes.[87] Palaimon is a rather inconspicuous figure and far less prominent than Hades or Plouton in vase painting, and therefore it would be surprising if a small local and rather specific sanctuary outside the centre of Athens would have influenced Attic or Apulian painters.[88] There is absolutely no need for a personal identity or a mythological name to grasp the meaning of these representations.

Similarly, it is unnecessary to specify where all these figured scenes are supposed to take place. We are no longer in the context of a mythical narrative, but now witnessing the epiphany of divinities acting according to their specific competences, that is protection, healing and prosperity. The power of the images helps to suggest and to encompass at the same time the fruitfulness of the Underworld, the perfection of the gods, the paradise of initiates and blessed ones, a festival in a shrine, and the feeling of the Eleusinian Mysteries. We are no longer confronted with the usual categories of Olympian and chthonian beings, but altogether in another sphere, where this opposition no longer exists. Herakles is now a god, well beyond death.

Cult-Related Imagery

Finally, I will comment on the iconography of Herakles that can be linked to a ritual context. One of the earliest pieces of evidence is an interesting Attic relief found in Lamptrai, probably from a sanctuary. This statue base dating from the beginning of the fifth century BCE is decorated with imagery of Herakles, not only the Lion and the Feast of Herakles, but also Herakles' *anabasis* with Kerberos.[89] The cornucopia also appears on some votive reliefs, for example an important fragment in Thebes (*Figure 8.7*), where Herakles

86 See infra. For the shrine of Pankrates-Herakles-Palaimon, see Vikela 1994.

87 Boardman 1989, 225 ('court' scenes for Dionysos) and 228 (for Herakles); Verbanck-Piérard (forthcoming).

88 As for *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 3493.

89 Kosmopoulou 2002, cat. 6.



FIGURE 8.7 *Marble votive relief, c. 380 BCE. Thebes, Archaeological Museum, 111.*
FROM W.H. ROSCHER, *AUSFÜHRLICHES LEXIKON DER GRIECHISCHEN UND RÖMISCHEN MYTHOLOGIE*, I, 2, LEIPZIG 1890, COL. 2187.

receives a cornucopia from a male deity holding what looks like a large thyrsus; a goddess is seated to right.[90]

The complicated set of reliefs from the sanctuary of Pankrates-Herakles, by the river Ilissos was briefly mentioned earlier.[91] This fertility and healing cult to Pankrates/Herakles mainly flourished during the fourth and third centuries

90 Thebes, Mus. 111, about 380 BCE, dedication by Eumedes; see *LIMC* V, s.v. Herakles, no. 3495; Tagalidou 1993, cat. 42 (with a photo of the relief and an exhaustive analysis); see also Tagalidou 1993, 129–39 ("Herakles mit dem Füllhorn"), cat. 37, relief in Rhamnous, and cat. 8, relief in Athens.

91 Vikela 1994. But see the critical reviews by Touchette 1999 and Holtzmann 1996. Tagalidou 1993, 159–65.

BCE. Most of the inscriptions and/or figures on the reliefs refer to the two main gods of the sanctuary, Pankrates and Herakles, or to the syncretistic Herakles-Pankrates (the name Pankrates becoming a kind of epiclesis).[92] Very few refer to Palaimon alone, who seems to have been an associated deity in the *temenos*, just as Serapis would be later on. Herakles and Pankrates, the "Almighty" bearded god, are usually shown with a cornucopia and could be linked with Hades or Zeus Meilichios.

From these examples, it is clear that Herakles is no longer content with simply moving freely within the Underworld or conducting his successful round trips to the world of the living, but that he also belongs – somewhat like Dionysos and Demeter – to a group of masters of a blessed and prosperous place beyond, a kind of a new Netherland. No wonder Persephone welcomes him like her brother, according to Diodoros.[93] Herakles with a cornucopia or assimilated to Pankrates is shown as a helping divinity, closer as ever to the figure of Hades, and is worshipped for his divine chthonian powers, which do not imply a heroic cult.

A striking piece of evidence of this powerful association between Herakles and Hades is found on the famous Derveni krater.[94] On the handle medallions, the faces of four very similar deities are represented, all protectors of the ashes of the deceased housed in the vessel: Hades, Dionysos, Achelous and Herakles. In this setting, Herakles, εὐεργέτης βροτοῖσι καὶ μέγας φίλος ("benefactor and great friend to mortals"),[95] is now part of a positive vision of the Underworld as a place of fertility and rebirth of the species. Death is a passage into the afterlife and Herakles will help and show the way.

Conclusion

Herakles' descent into Hades, mainly to capture Kerberos, introduces a presentation of the Underworld into the narrative and iconography of his exploits. At the same time, it is an opportunity to set the scene for the contrasting splendour and brilliance of Olympos, where Herakles will go to soon after. Herakles reveals to us the ends of the world and the untold spaces, which the living cannot access. The sources that connect Herakles to Hades

92 *CRESCAM, Banque de Données sur les Épiclèses Grecques*, s.v. Pankratès: (http://www.sites.univ-rennes2.fr/lahm/crescam/).

93 Diodoros of Sicily 4.26.1: ὡς ἂν ἀδελφός.

94 Barr-Sharrar 2008.

95 Euripides, *Herakles* 1252.

are numerous and complex to analyse. I have proposed to distinguish different kinds of documents and their specific use and context. The literary and mythographic tradition emphasizes Herakles' violent actions and painful Labours, his unrivalled bravery and victory over the horror of death, his strength and his exemplary heroic courage. In these settings, Hades is usually described as a dark, grim and dangerous location, where punishment of sacrilegious crimes is carried out. It is a place for sorrow, regrets and oblivion, populated by lifeless shadows. An Athenian innovation breaks with this pattern and links Herakles' *katabasis* with the Eleusinian initiation, as a kind of VIP-access to the Underworld.

The iconographic representation of the Underworld is generally more pleasant and gentle than its literary counterpart, but the borders are firmly closed and cannot be crossed, except for exceptional reasons. Images reveal Herakles' proximity to the rulers of the Underworld and, especially from the late fifth century BCE onwards, his status as a saviour, providing plenty and salvation. He is never *represented* as a dead hero in Hades. The images' polysemy has proved to be crucial for my study of this subject: the iconography shows us more than what the texts describe. It offers us a different view, which is richer, safer and untroubled, both of Herakles and of the Underworld, belonging to a cosmic order and divine justice.

For the literary evidence as well as for the images, there is a clear evolution over time, from the Archaic to Hellenistic and Roman periods, and even up to the present (*Figure 8.8*). We have noted the changes in Euripides' plays and in Classical vase painting. Such transformations have been generally related to the development of Eleusinian, Dionysiac and/or Orphic mysteries, which become mainstream from the fourth century BCE onwards and which involves Herakles' fate as well.[96] In the context of cult-related imagery, the action and powers of Herakles look similar to those of Hades, Plouton, Dionysos, various healing gods and even Zeus himself. Once again, we find that, even for a single deity, both Olympian and chthonian aspects co-exist smoothly and without opposition in the polytheistic religious structure: therein lies the strength and outstanding adaptability of the ancient Greek religious mentality.

96 For the debated question of the gold funerary lamellae, see e.g. the critical review of previous publications by Calame 2008, who highlights the links with the Eleusinian and Dionysiac mysteries, much more than with Orphism ("textes pseudo-orphiques": the name Orpheus never appears). For recent studies, see Stampolidis 2014, 34–41 and Tsifopoulos 2010, 180–93. See also the contribution by Scullion in this volume.



FIGURE 8.8 *Etching by Marian Maguire,* Herakles Attempts to Train Kerberos as a Sheep Dog (*2007*), *from the artist's series* The Labours o*f Heracles*.
SOURCE: © MARIAN MAGUIRE – PAPERGRAPHICA.

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CHAPTER 9

Hades in Hellenistic Philosophy (The Early Academy and Stoicism)

Adrian Mihai

A chapter on the various ancient philosophical conceptions of Hades in a collection dedicated to narratives of visitors to the Underworld (who actually came back) might seem unsuitable at first sight. And that, for two reasons: first, ancient philosophers were more interested in such questions as "What is Hades and where, cosmologically, is it situated?" or "What part of the soul goes there?" and "Does Hades as a place of souls really exists?," which raise questions about the nature of the soul. These questions were different from the interests of the poets (Vergil, for example), who were working with a traditional pattern (the journey of a hero to the Underworld and his return). We do not find such treatment in the philosophers, at least not in the Platonists and the Stoics. Second, for philosophers such as Plato, Zeno of Citium and Epicurus, the soul, after the death of the body, cannot return to earth. However, the philosophical perspective of Hades is important in this kind of volume, only if to show the difference or gap between such speculations and the ones of the poets. It is understandable then that the present contribution does not focus exactly on the visitors who return from the Underworld after a short visit there, since philosophers were not interested in such particular questions, but wanted to know the general nature of souls and their abode after the death of the body.

Whether or not the dispute that divides modern scholars regarding the importance of beliefs in the afterlife for Greek thought will ever be settled makes little difference to the subject at hand,[1] since the ancient philosophical writings bristle with remarks and analyses about the post-mortem destiny of the soul. The present study proposes to outline and to sketch the doctrine of Hades as an abode of the dead in various Hellenistic philosophers, mainly pertaining to the Old Academy and to the Early and Middle Stoic school. The choice of these two main schools in a study about the afterlife in antiquity

1 Many of the most renowned scholars on Greek religion still believe in a quasi-agnosticism of the Greeks concerning the fate of the soul in the afterlife. See, for example, Veyne 1983, Rudhardt 1992, 7, Grabbe 2000, 163–85 and Richard 2003, 43.

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should be an obvious one, since there is little in the Epicureans and the Peripatetics. The first denied any afterlife, since the soul consisted of subtle particles that dissolve at death. As for the latter, the lack of information is due mainly to the scarcity of our sources, yet we know the interest in the school about the nature and the function of the soul.

Any study of the afterlife in ancient thought must take into consideration a fundamental terminological distinction. In antiquity, at least from the Hellenistic period onwards, there were at least three locations where the souls of the dead could go: under the earth, in the sky or back on earth (since the soul can pass through various incarnations). These locations contained at least three realms of the afterlife: the Isles of the Blessed, Hades and Tartaros. Regarding the last two, and during the period that concerns us here, Hades was a kind of Purgatory, while Tartaros was what we might call Hell. In consequence, whenever we talk about Hades, we mean a place that has the following characteristics: (1) it is a place of transit, (2) situated either under the earth (as in Plato) or in the heavens (as in Herakleides or Xenokrates), (3) where the souls endure purifying expiations (4) for an unspecified period of time after which, if completely purified, the soul will continue its journey towards the Heavens. In contrast, Tartaros, like Hell, is a place of eternal punishment from where no soul can escape.[2]

Forasmuch as, then, the location of Hades in the heavens (see below) corresponds to or is based on both the ontological and cosmological function of the stars (the planets and the fixed stars), a word on their nature and the cosmological system is necessary here. According to the ancient conceptions, the stars were incorruptible bodies, hollow spheres, transparent, encircling the earth and animated by a uniform circular movement. The solar system of Late Antiquity was composed of seven planets (the moon was also considered to be a planet) revolving around the earth, which was situated at the center of the cosmos. Further, for the period that concerns us here, the authors under discussion follow the 'Egyptian' or 'Platonic' order of the planets, which is as follows: Earth, Moon, Sun, Mercury, Venus (or Venus, Mercury), Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. This order is fundamental for a good understanding of the localization of Hades as an abode of the souls.

Having thus delineated the contours of our study, I shall first look briefly at the Homeric Hades, which embodied, for ancient philosophers, the traditional view about the destiny of the soul after the death of the body. Then,

2 For a more complete account on the various representations of Hades in Antiquity, from the 5th c. BCE to the 6th c. CE, see Mihai 2015.

as a sort of introduction to what follows, I shall give a sketch of the Platonic conceptions of the afterlife, since some of his dialogues, especially the *Phaedo*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Gorgias*, the *Republic* and the *Timaeus* constituted a sort of sacred text for whoever was concerned about eschatology.

Homer

In the Homeric poems, after the death of the body, the breath, that is, the *psychē* (ψυχή), escapes through the mouth or through the gaping wound and flies always downwards, towards the House of Hades.[3]

> And I will go over to summon Paris,
> If he will listen to what I have to say.
> I wish the earth would gape open beneath him.
> Olympian Zeus has bred him as a curse
> To Troy, to Priam, and all Priam's children.
> If I could see him dead and gone to Hades,
> I think my heart might be eased of its sorrow![4]

Aïdes or Hades, as a god, is thus called ἐνέροισιν ἀνάσσων, "lord of the dead" (*Iliad* 15.188), and, as a place, his realm is located in the "nether gloom" (*Iliad* 15.191), under the surface of the earth. We must also mention that in Homer, for the most part, Hades is always a personal god, and only the genitive is used to denote the House of the Dead. Hades is used as a toponym only in *Iliad* 8.16 (Ἀΐδεω), where the abode of the dead is referred to as Hades, and not as the House of Hades.

Now, in regards to the journey of the soul: following the death of the body, the soul (ψυχή) is separated from the θύμος and descends towards the bowels of the earth. The *thumos* (θύμος) is the nexus of the intellectual, emotional and deliberative functions.[5] The losing of the *thumos* brings about the loss of consciousness and therefore death.[6] Hence, we have to distinguish, at least in the Archaic period, between *thumos* and *psychē*.[7]

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3 On the Homeric netherworld, see Tsagarakis 2000; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 10–107; Büchner 1937, 104–22; Caswell 1990; Bremmer 1987; Claus 1981; Warden 1971, 63–80.

4 Homer, *Iliad* 6.280–84, all trans. by Lombardo 1997. See also Homer, *Iliad* 7.330, 14.457 and 23.100 and *Odyssey* 10.560 and 11.65.

5 See Cheyns 1983, 20–86.

6 Caswell 1990, 2–3.

7 Snell 1994, 29.

In Hades, the soul is nothing but a replica or image of the deceased, an εἴδωλον (*Iliad* 23.103–7). Hades is situated under the earth (*Iliad* 7.330, 20.61–66, 23.100–1), beyond the Ocean (*Iliad* 14.200) and could be arrived at by sea (*Odyssey* 10.501–12 and 11.13–22). Once the souls have entered the Underworld, they cannot return to earth (*Iliad* 23.75) and they maintain a quasi-human appearance, that is, the appearance of the body (*Iliad* 23.65–67 and 106–7). Moreover, the souls cannot enter the Underworld until their dead bodies have been buried (*Iliad* 23.65–101). In the Homeric Hades, the souls do not suffer any punishments: due to the constitution of the soul, they cannot experience any pain (*Odyssey* 11.218–22). The Homeric Hades has the following characteristics, which are worth keeping in mind:

- Region under the earth (*Iliad* 7.330, 20.61–66, 23.100–1)
- Plain of forgetfulness, τὸ Λήθης πεδίον (see Aristophanes, *Frogs* 186)
- Souls are there without their θύμος (*Iliad* 9.334)
- Souls cannot return to earth (*Iliad* 23.75)
- Souls do not suffer any pain

Plato

Since Plato has had a long-lasting influence upon Graeco-Roman thought, and because of the number of his writings that have been preserved, we must first look briefly at his doctrine of the Underworld.

In the *Gorgias*, we read the following account of the destiny of the soul after the death of the body:

> As Homer tells it, after Zeus, Poseidon, and Pluto took over the sovereignty from their father, they divided it among themselves. Now there was a law concerning human beings during Kronos' time, one that gods even now continue to observe, that when a man who has lived a just and pious life comes to his end, he goes to the Isles of the Blessed, to make his abode in complete happiness, beyond the reach of evils, but when one who has lived in an unjust and godless way dies, he goes to the prison of payment and retribution, the one they call Tartaros.[8]

8 Plato, *Gorgias* 523a3–b4, trans. Zeyl.

As for the nature of Tartaros, the deepest part of Hades where we find the "the places of punishment beneath the earth" (ὑπὸ γῆς δικαιωτήρια), Plato puts it as follows:

> one of the hollows of the earth, which is also the biggest, pierces through the whole earth; it is that which Homer mentioned when he said: "Far down where is the deepest pit below the earth" [*Iliad* 8.14], and which he elsewhere, and many other poets, call Tartarus; into this chasm all the rivers flow together, and again flow out of it, and each river is affected by the nature of the land through which it flows. The reason for their flowing into and out of Tartarus is that this water has no bottom or solid base but it oscillates up and down in waves, and the air and wind about it do the same, for they follow it when it flows to this or that part of the earth.[9]

Regarding the punishment inflicted on the souls, in the *Republic* it is written that "the responsibility lies with the one who makes the choice; the god has none."[10] But, in the *Laws*, Plato asserts that the post-mortem destiny of the soul is settled in part by universal providence or superintendence, so that an artificer, with an eye on the whole, "has worked out what sort of position, in what regions, should be assigned to a soul to match its changes of character; but he left it to the individual's acts of will to determine the direction of these changes." And Plato continues saying that "all things that contain soul change, the cause of their change laying within themselves, and as they change they move according to the ordinance and law of destiny."[11]

Let us now return to the description of the journey of the soul. After the death of the body, the soul has to pass through a "daemonic region" (*Republic* 10.614c1), or a Meadow and a Crossroad (*Gorgias* 524a1), headed by three judges, Minos, Rhadamanthys and Aiakos:

> After they've died [scil. Minos, Rhadamanthys and Aiakos], they'll serve as judges in the meadow, at the three-way crossing from which the two roads go on, the one to the Isles of the Blessed and the other to Tartaros. Rhadamanthys will judge the people from Asia and Aiakos those from

9 Plato, *Phaedo* 111e6–112b4, trans. Grube. See also the contribution by Petrovic and Petrovic in this volume.

10 Plato, *Republic* 10.617e4–5, trans. Grube and Reeve. See also Müller 1997.

11 Plato, *Laws* 10.904b7–c2 and 904c6–9, trans. Saunders.

> Europe. I'll give seniority to Minos to render final judgment if the other two are at all perplexed, so that the judgment concerning the passage of humankind may be as just as possible.[12]

In this description, Plato says that there are two roads for the souls, one going upwards towards the Isles of the Blessed, the other going downwards towards Tartaros. Therefore, the Isles of the Blessed seem to be situated in the heavens. If we follow the *Timaeus*, the purified souls will return to their respective stars.

It is important to remember that in the *Republic* we find four "openings" or "hollows" (χάσματα), and not two, like in the *Gorgias*. Plato's description goes as follows: after the separation from their bodies, the souls

> came to a daemonic place, where there were two adjacent openings in the earth, and opposite and above them two others in the heavens, and between them judges sat. These, having rendered their judgment, ordered the just to go upwards into the heavens through the door on the right, with signs of the judgment attached to their chests, and the unjust to travel downward through the opening on the left, with signs of all their deeds on their backs.[13]

This place of judgment is situated, according to Proklos, between the heavens and the earth, "a place that, enveloping from outside the earth, enclosing its summits, its middle and a fortiori its bottom, forms from below a belt of heaven."[14] This belt of heaven reminds one of Aristotle's fiery belt beneath the Moon (*On the Heavens* II 7.289a30–35; *Meteorology* I 3.340b3). And this is exactly where Proklos assumes that Plato placed the three judges.[15]

In short, for Plato the just souls ascend towards the heavens and will dwell in the Isles of the Blessed, that is, the stars. The unjust and impious souls descend beneath the earth, towards the prisons of retribution, that is, Tartaros. The other souls either will undergo many incarnations until they are fully purified of their sins or they will fly towards a certain region of the sky, unspecified by Plato. This undefinedness in Plato's descriptions of the Underworld gave rise to various school exegeses from his immediate pupils. We will look, in what follows, at some of them.

12 Plato, *Gorgias* 524a1–7, trans. Zeyl.

13 Grube and Reeve 1992, trans. Plato, *Republic*, Hackett, 1992.

14 Proklos, *Commentary on Plato's Republic* II 131.18–20 Kroll, my translation.

15 Proklos, *Commentary on Plato's Republic* II 133.23.

Xenokrates (c. 396–314 BCE)

In a testimony on Xenokrates of Chalcedon, transmitted by the *Opinions on Physical Questions* (*Placita*) of Aëtius,[16] an epitome of opinions on natural philosophy written and assembled around the end of the first century BCE, but maybe going back as far as Theophrastos (c. 371–287 BCE),[17] we find one of the first elaborations of the doctrine of the heavenly Hades. The testimony of Aëtius recapitulates well Xenokrates' theology, scholarch or rector of the Academy from 339 to 314 BCE, which announces the theological speculations of Plutarch and the Neoplatonists. This theological *Weltanschauung* is grounded in part upon physical allegory, the belief that the gods are representations of the material elements found in the universe: Hades is the divine power animating the air, Poseidon animates the water, and Demeter the earth.

> Xenokrates, son of Agathenor, of Chalcedon, <holds> as gods the Monad and the Dyad [τὴν μονάδα καὶ τὴν δυάδα θεούς], the former as male [ἄρρενα], having the role of father [πατρὸς], reigning in the heaven [ἐν οὐρανῷ βασιλεύουσαν], which he terms 'Zeus' and 'odd' [περιττὸν] and 'intellect' [νοῦν], which is for him the primary god [πρῶτος θεός]; the other as female, in the manner of the Mother of the gods [μητρὸς θεῶν], which he terms <D> ike [<Δ>ίκην].[18] She rules over the realm below the heavens. It is for him the Soul of the universe [ψυχὴ τοῦ παντός]. He regards the heaven also as god, and the stars as fiery Olympian gods, and he believes also in other beings, invisible sublunary daemons. He also holds the view that <certain> divine powers [θείας (…) δυνάμεις] penetrate the material elements as well [τοῖς ὑλικοῖς στοιχείοις]. Of these, <that which occupies the air> he terms <Hades> [διὰ τοῦ ἀέρος Ἅιδην],[19] as being invisible

16 On Aëtius' *Placita*, see Mansfeld and Runia 1997 and 2009a. The fragment of Aëtius quoted here is still accessible only in Hermann Diels' 1879 edition of the Greek doxographers (Diels 1929).

17 According to Jaap Mansfeld, the transmission of this doxography on physical questions goes as follows: Theophrastos' Φυσικαὶ δόξαι → *Vetustissima Placita* (c. 3rd c. BCE, testimonies of which we find in Varro, Cicero and Lucretius) → <Posidonius'> *Vetusta Placita* (c. 80–60 BCE) → Aëtius' *Placita* → Ps.-Plutarch's *De placitis philosophorum* and → the first book of Stobaeus' *Anthologia*. See Mansfeld and Runia 1997; 2009a and 2009b.

18 We follow Boyancé 1948, 227 who conjectured <Δ>ίκη, that is, Xenokrates called the Dyad by the name of the goddess Dike. This conjecture has been accepted by I. Hadot and J. Dillon.

19 Conjecture of Richard Heinze to fill a lacuna of 15 words in the manuscript F (= codex Farnesinus III d15, c. 14th c.).

> [ἀειδῆ], that which occupies the water Poseidon, and that which occupies the earth Demeter the Seed-Sower. All these identifications he adapted from Plato, and passed on to the Stoics.[20]

The model that inspires this hypothesis according to which gods are, in a certain sense, an anthropomorphic transposition of the elementary powers of nature, divine powers that penetrate the material elements, could be found easily in the first allegorists of the Homeric poems.

> Hades "below" [*Iliad* 15.193–99] is Homer's allegorical way of naming "air;" this element is dark because, presumably, it is assigned to a denser and damper region; at any rate, it is separated from possible sources of light and does not shine, and so is quite properly called Hades, "the invisible" [ἀίδην] [...]. In all this, Homer has given us indications of the basic elements of the natural world.[21]

The elements are animated by divine substances, as Hades animates the air. For Annaeus Cornutus (flor. 60 CE),

> Hades is said to be their [scil. Zeus' and Poseidon's] brother. This is the most dense and earthy air, which is produced along with them when nature starts to flow and bring things about according to the principles within it. It is called "Hades" [Ἅιδης] either because it is essentially unseen [ἀόρατός] (so that he is also called "Aïdes," with diaeresis); or by antithesis, as if it is the one who pleases us – for it appears that this is where our souls go at death, and death is least pleasing to us.[22]

The etymology that derives Ἅιδης [Hades] from ἀειδής [invisible] spread widely during the Hellenistic and Roman periods and is evident already in the work of Plato and his disciples.[23]

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20 Xenokrates, fr. 213 Isnardi Parente 1982 = fr. 133 Isnardi Parente 2012 = fr. 15 Heinze 1892 = Aëtius, *Placita* I 7.30 Diels, trans. Dillon, slightly modified.

21 Herakleitos, *Homeric Problems* 23.9–11, 14 and 24.1 Buffière; trans. by Russell and Konstan.

22 Cornutus, *Epitome of the Things Handed Down in Greek Theology* 5.4–5 Lang, transl. Boys-Stones.

23 Plato, *Gorgias* 493b: ὡς τῶν ἐν Ἅιδου – τὸ ἀϊδὲς δὴ λέγων. Cf. *Phaedo* 80d and *Cratylus* 403a. See also, Plotinus, *Enneads* VI [4] 16.37 Henry-Schwyzer; Porphyry, *Starting-Points Leading to the Intelligibles* (*Sententiae*) XXIX 18.12 Lamberz.

The preceding passages have not been adduced here in order to prove an alleged borrowing of Xenokrates from the allegorists, or that these ones were his source, although in other respects this possibility should not be excluded. What matters is that this passage of Xenokrates shows a close correspondence between physical, anthropological and theological theories. The *stoicheia* (fire, air, earth and water) are seen as both spiritual and physical powers which animate from inside or administrate from outside the stars and the elements.

This discussion is also related to the Platonic doctrine of the stars as divine beings governed by a soul, called "younger gods" or "recent gods" (*Timaeus* 42d6). According to this doctrine, the fixed stars and the planets are gods that assist the Demiurge in the creation of the human being. The Demiurge creates the reasonable part of the soul, whilst the astral gods created the irrational part – that is,

> the mortal kind, which contains within it those dreadful but necessary disturbances: pleasure, first of all, evil's most powerful lure; then pains, that make us run away from what is good; besides these, boldness also and fear, foolish counsellors both; then also the spirit of anger hard to assuage, and expectation easily led astray.[24]

As for the location of Hades, Xenokrates situates it between the Earth and the Moon. Here are some often-quoted lines, though hitherto hardly evaluated, from Macrobius' commentary on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* (commentary written around 420–430 CE):

> They declared that the immutable part of the universe extended from the outer sphere, which is called the *aplanes*, the fixed sphere, down to the beginning of the Moon's sphere, and that the changeable part extended from the Moon to the Earth; that souls were living while they were in the immutable part but died when they fell into the region subject to change, and that accordingly the area between the Moon and the Earth was known as the infernal regions of the dead. The opinion that the Moon is the demarcation of life and death and that souls falling from there towards the Earth die and that those rising from there to the heavens are returning to life has some merit. The realm of the perishable begins with the Moon and goes downwards. Souls coming into this region begin to be subject to the numbering of days and to time.[25]

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24 Plato, *Timaeus* 69c8–d4, trans. Zeyl.

25 Macrobius, *Commentary of the Dream of Scipio* I 11.6 Armisen-Marchetti, trans. Stahl.

In this section of his commentary, Macrobius, a Latin Platonist influenced by the philosophies of Numenius and Porphyry, pupil and editor of Plotinos, exposes three Platonic theses concerning the location of the *infernus*. The passage just quoted describes the ideas of the first Platonic group, identified by recent scholars with the "middle Platonists" Albinus and Atticus.[26] However, this Platonic thesis contains nothing but common topoi of Hellenistic philosophy that we find already in Aristotle and the early Academy. The main theme in this passage is the distinction between the celestial and the sublunary zones, according to which whatever lay beneath the Moon was prone to decay and death; whatever was comprised between the Moon and the fixed stars denoted the aethereal and divine region of the cosmos.[27] It was thus said that the Moon was "the frontier between life and death," since it divides both regions. This same idea has been sometimes even assigned to Empedokles.

> As Empedokles said that the entire region where we are is full of evils and that evils reach to the Moon extending from the terrestrial region, but go no further, since the entire region above the Moon is more pure.[28]

Furthermore, the air that envelops the earth is polluted and contains only mortal beings, passible and always changing.[29]

> Flecks in the sky and mist and fog and anything else that does not provide a transparent medium for light to reach our senses are merely variations of air; and its invisible and colorless part is called Hades and Acheron. In the same way, then, as air is dark when light is gone, so when heat departs the residue is cold air and nothing else. And this is the reason why it has been termed Tartaros because of its coldness.[30]

26 Regali 1983, 314–16.

27 Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* II 56; Aëtius, *Placita* II 3.4 Mansfeld and Runia; Arius Didymus, fr. 9 (Diels); Epiphanes, *Panarion* III 2.9 Holl; Ps.-Galen, *History of Philosophy* 46 (Diels); Hermias, *Derision of Gentile Philosophers* 11 Diels; Atticus, frs. 5.39–47 Des Places; Seneca, *Epistle* 59.16; Pliny, *Natural History* II 48; Apuleius, *On the Universe* 2–3; Kleomedes, *Elementary Theory of the Heavens* II 99.178.26–28 Todd; Calcidius, *On Plato's Timaeus* 76 Magee.

28 Empedokles, 31A62 Diels-Kranz = fr. A62 Inwood, trans. Inwood.

29 See Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* I 42; Augustine, *City of God* XIV 3 Dombart-Kalb[4]; Cornutus, *Epitome of the Things Handed Down in Greek Theology* 59 Lang.

30 Plutarch, *On the Principle of Cold* 948f1–2 Helmbold = Arnim 1964, II 430, trans. Helmbold.

Before moving on to the doctrine of Herakleides of Pontos about the netherworld, let us briefly explore Xenokrates' cosmology, in order to gain a better understanding of his conception of the heavenly Hades. Following the testimony of Aëtius just quoted, it seems that Xenokrates maintained a tripartition of the cosmos: (1) a supra-celestial region, (2) a celestial region, and (3) a sublunary region.[31]

Over the first region, the supra-celestial one, reigns the One or the first God (πρῶτος θεός) or the Monad, called also Zeus, the odd and intellect. Even if in our passage we encounter the expression "in the heaven" (ἐν οὐρανῷ), this should not be taken *expressis verbis*. According to another testimony transmitted by Plutarch,[32] we learn that Xenokrates believed that Zeus is "supreme" (ὕπατος) and dwells "between the immutable and identical things," that is, the intelligible Forms situated beyond the visible cosmos. The Dyad, as female principle, is subordinated to the One and presides over the distribution of divine justice in the sublunary region. And if we accept the conjecture of Eduard Zeller and Hermann Diels, to wit, θείας εἶναι δυνάμεις, then the principles are the following: the *Nous*-Monad as model of the World, whilst the Dyad is the World-Soul.[33] Furthermore, if we also accept the philologically plausible conjecture proposed by Pierre Boyancé, to wit, μητρὸς θεῶν Δίκην, then Xenokrates calls the Dyad as Mother of the gods by the name of Dike (Justice), who was according to Plato the πάρεδρος (advisor, assessor, coadjutor) of Zeus.[34]

The second region is the one of the Heavens, which comprises the region between the fixed stars and the Moon. The Heavens or the sky is also a god. Moreover, Xenokrates identifies the Olympian gods with the Sun, the Moon, the planets and the other heavenly bodies. The third and last region, the sublunary one, is under the dominion of Hades, a second Zeus, Δία νέατος.[35] In this region we also find the "invisible sublunary daemons," which were represented as incorporeal spirits.

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31 See Schibli 1993, 143–67; Baltes 1988, 43–68; Krämer 1964, 21–126; Thiel 2006.

32 Xenokrates, frs. 216–17 Isnardi Parente 1982 = frs. 92 Isnardi Parente 2000 = fr. 18 Heinze 1892 = Plutarch, *Platonic Questions* 1007f Cherniss.

33 Krämer 1964, 35–42.

34 Plato, *Laws* 4.716a. See also Hesiod, *Works and Days* 255–59: "There is a maiden, Justice, born of Zeus, celebrated and revered by the gods who dwell on Olympos, and whenever someone harms her by crookedly scorning her, she sits down at once beside her father Zeus, Cronus' son, and proclaims the unjust mind of human beings" (trans. Most).

35 Xenokrates, frs. 216–17 Isnardi Parente 1982 = fr. 92 Isnardi Parente 2000 = fr. 18 Heinze 1892 = Plutarch, *Platonic Questions* 1007f Cherniss.

Herakleides of Pontos (c. 390–310)

In a passage transmitted by Damaskios, head of the Neoplatonic school of Athens from about 515 to 529 CE, who in turn is quoted by John Philoponos (c. 490–570), a Christian Neoplatonist, it is said that

> Empedotimos says that "the Milky Way is the path of souls which pass through the Hades situated in the sky."[36]

And a little further, Philoponos adds:

> And he [Empedotimos, reported by Damaskios] says: "The Milky Way is the path of the souls which pass through the Hades situated in the sky." Thus, if they pass through the Milky Way, the latter would be the Hades situated in the sky.[37]

This testimony about Herakleides of Pontos (Empedotimos being a character in one of Herakleides' philosophical dialogues), a pupil of Plato[38] and a schoolfellow of Xenokrates, comes from Philoponos' commentary on the first book of Aristotle's *Meteorology*, in an invective against Damaskios' mythical conception of the Milky Way. Having analyzed elsewhere in detail the interpretative difficulties that this testimony poses,[39] we will give here only a brief description of Herakleides' conception of Hades as a place for the disembodied souls.

From the same dialogue (either *On the Soul* or *On the Things in Hades*), we have another paraphrase transmitted by another Neoplatonist, Proklos (c. 412–485 CE), that reveals to Empedotimos the truth about life after death:

> Nor is it impossible that a human soul gained the divine truth of the situation in the Underworld and reported it to humans. This is also shown by the account according to Empedotimos, which Herakleides of Pontos narrated. Herakleides says that while Empedotimos was hunting in some place with other people at high noon, he himself was left alone, and after encountering the epiphany of Pluto and Persephone the light that runs

36 Herakleides, fr. 52 Schütrumpf = Philoponos, *On Aristotle's Meteorology* I 117.11–12 Hayduck, trans. Kupreeva, slightly modified.

37 Philoponos, *On Aristotle's Meteorology* I 117.31–33 Hayduck, trans. Kupreeva.

38 Against the opinion that Herakleides was a pupil of Plato, see Gottschalk (1980, 3–6) and Mihai (2015, 81–82).

39 Mihai 2015, 81–148.

> in a circle around the gods shone down upon him, and through it he saw in visions that he personally experienced the whole truth about souls.[40]

The description revealed to Empedotimos goes as follows (as reconstructed from the various testimonies transmitted to us from antiquity). After the death of the body, the soul, which is of an aethereal or luminous nature (αἰθέριον σῶμα, φωτοειδῆ τὴν φύσιν), that is, a corporeal light,[41] escapes towards the sky. In a first region of the sky (situated below the moon), the soul is purified in the aerial zone comprised between the earth and the moon – it is the 'purgatorial Hades'.[42] After its purification, the soul continues its ascension and settles in the Milky Way, which we can also call the 'empyrean Hades',[43] situated between the moon and the sun. It is for this reason that we think that for Herakleides, the Milky Way was constituted of stars different in nature from the fixed stars. As Hans B. Gottschalk puts it,

> discarnate souls were no longer lodged in the ordinary stars but formed a distinct category of luminaries in the sky. So it was natural to collect them all in one region, and no more appropriate place could be found for them than the Milky Way, whose real nature was a puzzle to the astronomers of the time but which had long been regarded as a pathway or dwelling-place of the dead in popular belief.[44]

Moreover, in a passage transmitted by Damaskios, it is said that Herakleides divided the Universe into three regions, according to the Homeric division of the world between the sons of Kronos:[45]

> That the division of the earth is threefold. One <is a division> according to the three sons of Kronos: for the earth and the sky are common to them, Homer says [*Iliad* 15.193]. But if it is common [scil. the earth] it is

40 Herakleides, fr. 54A Schütrumpf = Proklos, *Commentary on Plato's Republic* 10.119.18–27 Kroll, trans. Stork, Van Ophuijsen and Prince, slightly modified.

41 Philoponos, *On Aristotle's on the Soul* 9.5–7 Hayduck and *On Aristotle's Meteorology* 1.117.11–12 = Herakleides, fr. 98c Wehrli.

42 This terminology is mine, not Herakleides'. See also Gottschalk 1980, 98–102.

43 I use this expression "empyrean Hades" out of convenience; it does not pertain to Herakleides' vocabulary.

44 Gottschalk 1980, 105.

45 Homer, *Iliad* 15.187–93. Cf. Proklos, *Commentary on Plato's Republic* II, p. 140.14–17 Kroll and Plato, *Gorgias* 523a4–5.

> clear that it could be divided among them; and if Poseidon were not the speaker and were not marking off his own realm, but Zeus <were>, to be sure he would have apportioned the sky into three parts, as the account of Empedotimos says [ὁ Ἐμπεδοτίμου λόγος]: for himself [scil. Zeus], the fixed sphere, for Poseidon the <outer> spheres up to the Sun, and for Pluto [= Hades] the rest.[46]

Thus, Zeus governs over the sphere of the fixed stars, Poseidon over the planetary spheres until the sun, and the realm of Pluto/Hades consists of the region situated between the sun and the earth.[47] Because the Milky Way is bright and star-like, then it should, according to Herakleides, be situated just under the sun. It is therefore not, as Aristotle maintained, an atmospherical phenomenon.

The domain of Hades is continuous (including the space between the earth and the Sun), but it is divided by the moon in two regions: a purgatorial and an Elysian zone. In the empyrean Hades, which is assimilated to the Milky Way, the souls have as "vehicles" the stars (which should not be confused with the stars situated in the sphere of the fixed stars). These stars of the Milky Way are thus the vehicles of the soul, ὀχήματα τῆς ψυχῆς.

Varro (c. 116–27 BCE) transmits another testimony according to which Herakleides affirmed that the soul's journey through the sky follows three paths and passes through three zodiacal doors or gates:

> Varro nevertheless said that he had read that the mortal vision had been wiped away from a certain Syracusan Empedotimos by the agency of a certain divine power, and that he had seen among other things three doors and three paths, one at the sign of the scorpion (*Scorpio*), by which Herakles is said to have gone to the gods, the second along the boundary that is between the lion (*Leo*) and the crab (*Cancer*), and the third is between the water bearer (*Aquaris*) and the fishes (*Pisces*).[48]

46 Damaskios, *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo* II, d131 Westerink = fr. 58 Schütrumpf, trans. Westerink.

47 According to Dillon 2003, 213, n. 96, the location of Hades between the Sun and the earth could be based on an error of the student that transcribed Damaskios' lesson on Plato's *Phaedo*, from where this passage is extracted. See however the discussion in Mihai 2015, 129–31.

48 Varro, *Menippeae*, fr. 557 Cèbe, apud Servius, *Commentary on Virgil's Georgics* I 34 Thilo = Herakleides, fr. 57 Schütrumpf, trans. Stork, Van Ophuijsen and Prince.

From the passage of Varro, we learn the function of the first road, through Scorpio (the path taken by the good and philosophical souls to go towards the gods), but he does not mention the function of the other two roads. If we suppose, with Hans B. Gottschalk,[49] that Herakleides gives here an interpretation of the myth of Er (*Republic* 10.614c) and, we might add, an interpretation of the myth of the *Phaedrus*, then we could infer that the second road (through Leo and Cancer) is the path taken by the souls to go towards the sublunary Hades, and the third road (through Aquaris and Pisces) takes the souls that have not been neither too good nor too bad towards a certain region of the heavens.

We find this same tripartition of souls in Plato's *Phaedrus*, according to which the wise souls return towards their divine abode, the impious souls are taken towards the earthly Hades in order to be judged, and the average souls are borne aloft "in a certain region of the heavens" (οὐρανοῦ τινα τόπον).

> Of all these incarnations, any who have led their lives with justice will change to a better fate, and any who have led theirs with injustice, to a worse one. In fact, no soul returns to the place from which it came for ten thousand years, since its wings will not grow before then, except for the soul of a man who practices philosophy without guile or who loves boys philosophically. If, after the third cycle of one thousand years, the last-mentioned souls have chosen such a life three times in a row, they grow their wings back, and they depart in the three-thousandth year. As for the rest, once their first life is over, they come to judgment; and, once judged, some are condemned to go to places of punishment beneath the earth and pay the full penalty for their injustice, while the others are lifted up by justice to a certain region of the heaven where they live in the manner the life they led in human form has earned them. In the thousandth year both groups arrive at a choice and allotment of second lives, and each soul chooses the life it wants.[50]

It is certainly reasonable to compare the Heraklidean theory with Plato's, as we find it in the *Phaedrus*, a dialogue that exercised immense influence upon ancient philosophers.[51] We thus find in the Platonic passage just quoted three kinds of souls and three regions assigned to each of them:

49 Gottschalk 1980, 99.

50 Plato, *Phaedrus* 248e3–249b3, trans. Nehamas-Woodruff, slightly modified.

51 See Westerink and Saffrey 2003, IX–XXXVII and Boyancé 1952, 312–49.

1) At the lowest level, beneath the earth (either in Hades as a whole or, more specifically, in Tartaros, the deepest part of Hades), we find the souls that have sinned during their life;
2) At the highest, we encounter the souls of the philosophers, οἱ φιλοσοφίᾳ ἱκανῶς καθηράμενοι of the *Phaedo* (114c2–3), who will return in the company of the gods, beyond the vault of heaven, in a region beyond the visible cosmos, ὁ ὑπερουράνιος τόπος (*Phaedrus* 247c3);
3) Finally, between the pious souls and the incurable souls, Plato locates the souls that are neither too good nor too bad. These souls, the μέσως βεβιωκότες of the *Phaedo* (113d4), that is, those who have lived an average life, are lifted to a certain region of the heavens. Plato says nothing else about this place.

We can see, therefore, that the discussion on the topography of the netherworld in Herakleides comprises various facets: the exegetical tradition of the *Phaedrus* (246e3–248c2) crosses an astronomico-astrological discourse particularly attentive to the role of the stars upon the destiny of human beings.

These are the guidelines of this original conception of Hades. It will be in the myths of Plutarch[52] that it will attain its most genial expression, whilst it will be significantly weakened and edulcorated in the philosophical works of Late Antiquity.

Stoicism

It was a *communis opinio* in antiquity that for the Stoics the souls of the dead fly away towards the orb of the moon.[53] A paradigmatic example of this doctrine is the testimony regarding Chrysippos' conception of the netherworld transmitted by Tertullian:

> To the question, therefore, whither the soul is withdrawn, we now give an answer. Almost all the philosophers, who hold the soul's immortality, notwithstanding their special views on the subject, still claim for it this (eternal condition), as Pythagoras, and Empedokles, and Plato, and as

52 Plutarch, *On the Face in the Moon* 940f–945d Cherniss; *On the Sign of Socrates* (*De genio Socratis*) 589f–592e Hani; and *On the Delays of the Divine Vengeance* (*De sera*) 563b–568f Vernière. See also Mihai 2015, 185–224.

53 Arius Didymus, *Epitome of Stoic Ethics*, fr. 39 Diels = Arnim 1964, II 821. See also Arnim 1964, II 1076, II 430, I 147, II 812.

> they who indulge it with some delay from the time of its quitting the flesh to the conflagration of all things, and as the Stoics, who place only their own souls, that is, the souls of the wise, in the mansions above [...] In his [scil. Plato] system, then, the souls of the wise are carried up on high into the aether: according to Arius, into the air; according to the Stoics, into the Moon. I wonder, indeed, that they [scil. Stoics] abandon to the earth the souls of the unwise [*imprudentes animas*], when they affirm that even these are instructed by the wise, so much their superiors. For where is the school where they can have been instructed in the vast space which divides them? By what means can the pupil-souls [*discipulae*] have resorted to their teachers [*magistras*], when they are parted from each other by so distant an interval? What profit, too, can any instruction afford them at all in their posthumous state, when they are on the brink of perdition by the universal fire? [...] Shall we then have to sleep high up in aether, with the boy-loving worthies of Plato; or in the air with Arius; or around the Moon with the Endymions of the Stoics?[54]

In this passage, Tertullian amalgamates various ancient opinions regarding the netherworld. As for the Stoics (Chrysippos' philosophy came to be viewed as Stoic orthodoxy),[55] it seems that the soul of the sages, that is, the soul of those who have purified themselves in this life, fly towards the moon to dwell around it (*sub lunam*) until the final conflagration.[56] This sojourn is without damnations or beatitudes. The souls of the impious (*imprudentes animas*) are located below this one, *circa terram*.

We recall that the Stoic eschatological doctrine was based, in part, on an etymological exegesis of the names of the gods. Thus, Zeus represents the aether; Hera, the earth; Hades or Aïdoneus is the dark or unillumined air (ἀφώτιστος ἀήρ). A passage from the *Homeric Problems* of Herakleitos, who lived around the first century of our era, summarizes well the Stoic allegorical exegesis:

> Let no one ask of Homer, how it can be that aether is given the name Zeus, while he calls air Hades, obscuring his philosophy by these symbolic names [...] And what of Empedokles of Akragas? Does he not imitate Homeric allegory when he wants to indicate the four elements to us?
>
> *Bright Zeus, life-bringing Hera, Aïdoneus* [= Hades],

54 Chrysippos, fr. 822 Dufour = Arnim 1964, II 814, trans. Holmes. On the myth of Endymion, king of Elis and lover of Selene (= the Moon), see Boyancé 1939, 319–24.

55 Sellars 2014, 7–8; Gould 1971, 207–9.

56 Arnim 1964, II 811.

> *Nestis, who wets with tears a mortal spring* (31B6 Diels-Kranz).
>
> By Zeus he means aether (Ζῆνα […] τὸν αἰθέρα), by Hera earth (γῆν … τὴν Ἥραν), by Aïdoneus air (Ἀιδωνέαδὲ τὸν ἀέρα), by the mortal spring wet with tears water[57] […] For their mother, Homer has given us Rhea, because the universe is controlled by a flow and an ever-flowing motion. Thus he made earth and water the children of Time and Flow, and set aether and air by their side. He assigned heaven as the site of the fiery substance, and gave the watery substance to Poseidon. Hades, the third, represents unillumined air; and he shows earth to be the element common to all, completely stable, the hearth, as it were, of the creation of the universe.[58]

It seems that such writers as Herakleitos the allegorist and Pseudo-Plutarch interpret the Homeric myths by means of physical exegesis and that they transmit a well-founded doctrine already formed around the time of Plato.[59] Furthermore, this doctrine was based on the Stoic conception of the fiery nature of the Moon. For them, the Moon was subtle and formed of fire and air, which is dark and extends until the Moon.[60] There is thus an affinity between the Moon, the soul and the fire that elements the whole universe.[61]

It has to be emphasized that the exegetical method of the Stoics, which interprets the gods as personifications of the cosmological elements (στοιχεῖα), goes hand in hand with the Stoic cosmology or cosmogony. We encounter two 'stages' in Stoic cosmology:[62] the first is the production of the four elements by Zeus or eternal fire.[63] The second is the cosmogenesis or the generation of the world from the four elements.[64] The elements are then arranged in the cosmos as follows (in ascending order, from the earth to the fixed stars): earth, water, air (from the earth until the moon) and fire (which envelops the planets and

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57 Cf. Empedokles, 31A33 Diels-Kranz = Ps.-Plutarch, *Lives of Homer* 99. See also Diogenes Laertios, *Lives* VIII 76 and Athenagoras, *Legatio* XXII 1–2. We find in Aëtius (*Placita* I 3.20) the following correspondences: Hera = air and Hades = earth.

58 Herakleitos, *Homeric Problems* XXIV 1.6–7 and XLI 8–10 Buffière, translation Russel and Konstan. It seems improbable that Herakleitos pertained to the Stoic school. See Long 1996, 64, n. 13.

59 Buffière 1956, 124.

60 Philo, *On Dreams* I 145 = Arnim 1964, II 674. On the fiery nature of the Moon, see Arnim 1964, I 120 (Zeno), I 560 (Cleanthes), II 650 and 666–80 (Chrysippos).

61 Arnim 1964, I 120.

62 Arnim 1964, I 102, II 580 and Diogenes Laertios, *Lives* VII 136.

63 Arnim 1964, II 413 and 580.

64 Arnim 1964, II 427.

the fixed stars). Moreover, there is an affinity between the cosmic fire, the soul and the moon. This is also one of the reasons why the Stoics use indiscriminately fire, air, aether (subtle fire or subtle air) and *pneuma* (fiery air, corporeal breath).[65]

To recapitulate our analysis of the Stoic conception of Hades we cannot do better than quote from the excellent study of René Hoven on the afterlife in Stoicism:

> Au moins de Chrysippe à Posidonius, – et probablement déjà de Zénon à Posidonius, – les Stoïciens plaçaient l'âme survivante, "corps léger," dans une région supraterrestre, rejetaient la croyance en un Hadès souterrain et présentaient une interprétation allégorique de l'Hadès. L'âme ne dépassait pas, semble-t-il, la zone sublunaire: d'autre part, certains Stoïciens établissaient peut-être une distinction, en plaçant les âmes des sages plus haut que celles des "insensés."[66]

As mentioned above, it is most important when talking about the Netherworld in ancient thought to constantly keep in mind the correspondence of Hades with Purgatory. We must therefore note that the lunar Hades of the Stoics is not a purgatorial place, like the Platonic Hades of Herakleides and Xenokrates, since the soul does not undergo any punishment.

Conclusions

I have sought to present, and in some cases to reconstruct, the philosophical conceptions about Hades as abode of the souls both in early Platonism and Stoicism. My study has showed that Hades was no longer represented as an underground place but was situated in the heavens. I have also highlighted that there is a close correspondence between the nature of the soul and the localization of Hades. From the various analyses it emerged that for the early Platonists, Hades could be best described as a purgatorial place, a transitional region in which the soul purifies itself in order to be able to return to its divine abode.

As far as the history of ideas is concerned, the ancient philosophical contribution to religious topics is still understudied. The sketch given here has

65 Plutarch, *On Stoic Self-Contradiction* 42.

66 Hoven 1971, 78.

attempted to explore the manner in which the philosophical representations of the afterlife differ from the traditional and religious outlook. This difference is due mainly, as is well known, to the speculative freedom that Greek philosophers enjoyed (even in Homer and Hesiod we find quite a free attitude towards the gods), who were able, in the absence of dogmas and centralized religion, to give multifarious interpretations to religious experiences.

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CHAPTER 10

Following the Dead to the Underworld

An Archaeological Approach to Graeco-Roman Death Oracles

Wiebke Friese

> But when in thy ship thou hast now crossed the stream of Okeanos, where is a level shore and the groves of Persephone – tall poplars, and willows that shed their fruit – there do thou beach thy ship by the deep eddying Okeanos, but go thyself to the dank house of Hades. There into Acheron flow Periphlegethon and Cocytus, which is a branch of the water of the Styx; and there is a rock, and the meeting place of the two roaring rivers. Thither, prince, do thou draw nigh, as I bid thee, and dig a pit of a cubit's length this way and that, and around it pour a libation to all the dead, first with milk and honey, thereafter with sweet wine, and in the third place with water, and sprinkle thereon white barley meal. And do thou earnestly entreat the powerless heads of the dead, vowing that when thou comest to Ithaca thou wilt sacrifice in thy halls a barren heifer, the best thou hast, and wilt fill the altar with rich gifts; and that to Teiresias alone thou wilt sacrifice separately a ram, wholly black, the goodliest of thy flock. But when with prayers thou hast made supplication to the glorious tribes of the dead, then sacrifice a ram and a black ewe, turning their heads toward Erebos but thyself turning backward, and setting thy face towards the streams of the river. Then many ghosts of men that are dead will come forth.
>
> (HOMER, *Odyssey* 10.509–30. Trans. Murray)

Odysseus's journey to the gates of the Underworld to question the dead seer Teiresias is the earliest as well as the most impressive literary account of ancient Greek necromancy (*Figure 10.1*). In fact Homer's description of its sequence and its topography – the rock at the junction of the three rivers Acheron, Periphlegethon and Kokytos – appears to be so explicit that scholars are continuously reconstructing historical settings for the plot at various places all over the ancient Graeco-Roman world.[1] The Greek term *nekyomanteion* (a place of necromancy) was first mentioned in the fifth century BCE by Herodotos to

1 On necromancy generally (also referring to Homer), see Hopfner 1924, 148–63; Cumont 1949, 96–108 and mainly Ogden 2001 (with older bibliography); Bremmer 2015 (on rituals and the terminology). On ghosts especially and with older bibliography, Johnston 1999. The main focus of all research lies on the literary material.

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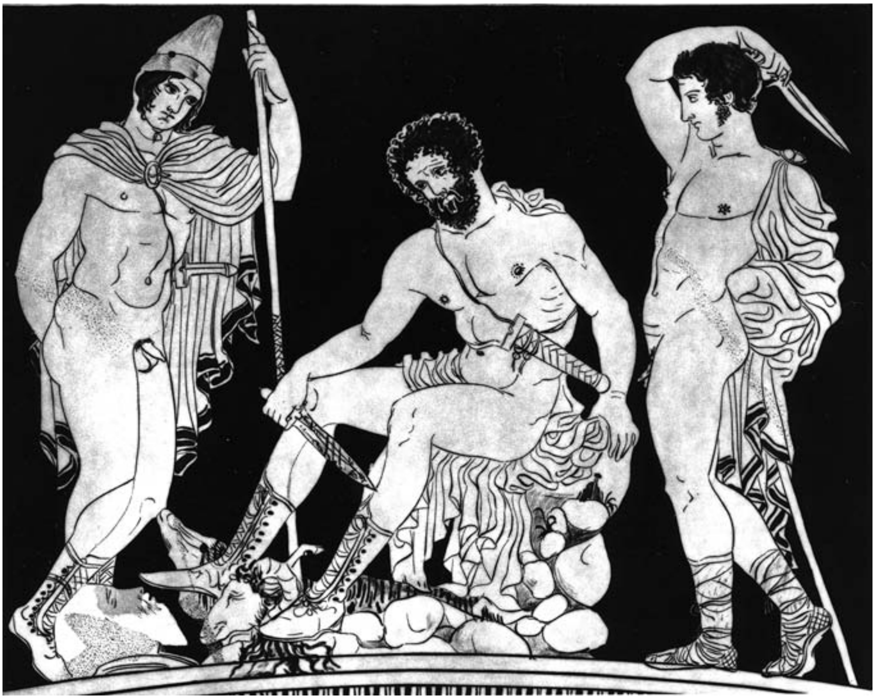


FIGURE 10.1 *Odysseus consulting the shade of Teiresias. Lucanian red-figure kalyx krater in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris, by Dolon Painter, c. 400–375 BCE.*
FROM A. FURTWÄNGLER AND K. REICHHOLD, GRIECHISCHE VASENMALEREI, VOL. 1, MUNICH 1900, PL. 60.1.

describe an "oracle of the dead on the river Acheron in Thesprotia."[2] The term was further used by Sophocles for a "Tyrsenian lake," probably Lake Avernus near Cumae in Campania.[3] In Roman times, Pausanias' *Periegesis* reported of the "Aornum in Thesprotis, where of old was an oracle of the dead" while talking about the myth of the Thracian hero Orpheus.[4] Plutarch associated the term with a particular historical topography, the "oracle of death at Herakleia" on the Black Sea coast – the place where the tyrant Pausanias was said to have consulted the ghost of Kleonike.[5] Similarly used were the terms *psychomanteion* (a seeing-place of the dead) and *psychopompeion* (a sending-place of

2 Herodotos 5.92, trans. Godley. Herodotos, though, does not mention Odysseus in this context. For a more detailed explanation of the term, see Ogden, 2001, XIX–XXI.

3 Sophocles fr. 748. Also Strabo 5.4.5 and Diodoros of Sicily 4.22.

4 Pausanias 9.30.6. Translation by W.H.S. Jones et al.

5 Plutarch, *Life of Cimon* 6.

the dead).[6] While these pre-Christian authors mainly used the term in a non-Homeric but mythical context, Late Antique scholiasts on Homer's work started to associate νεκυομαντήιον specifically with the Teiresian oracle and its topography.[7] Following them, modern researchers frequently assigned the Homeric myth a historical and institutionalized ritual topography with a cult already established when the *Odyssey* found its form.[8] The main sites associated with the Homeric ritual were Ephyra in Thesprotia, Tainaron on the Mani peninsula, Herakleia on the Black Sea coast and Lake Avernus near Cumae in Campania.[9]

As F. Graf has already stated, the terms *psychopompeion, psychomanteion* and *nekyomanteion* "as the places where souls could be placated" are rare in literature, and to cite Sarah Iles Johnston, "in spite of the fact that the Greeks and Romans liked to *think* about necromancy, they seldom or never practiced it."[10] The present paper questions to what extent this part of the Homeric myth can be traced in the archaeology of the ancient Mediterranean sacred landscape. While I have discussed the topography of necromantic rituals in earlier articles, this paper will focus on Graeco-Roman entrances to Hades and their inconsistency in the literary and archaeological evidence from antiquity until today.[11] Presenting different case studies from all over the Mediterranean world, it can be argued that while the Homeric myth influenced the invention and spatial formation of particular cults, rituals and sites, it was never based on an historical ritual or topography itself.

Nekyomanteia in the Ancient Mediterranean Sacred Landscape

Traveling through Greece in the second century CE, Pausanias passed more than one entrance to the Underworld.[12] The majority of these places he either

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6 *Psychomanteion*: Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.115; *psychopompeion* as in Plutarch's description (*Moralia* 560e-f) on the underground entrance inside the sanctuary of Poseidon at Tainaron on the very tip of the Mani peninsula. Also used by Plutarch for Herakleia, *Moralia* 555c.

7 Lucius Ampelius, *Liber memorialis* 83. Scholiast on Homer, *Odyssey* hypothesis 5.

8 Hopfner 1921–1924, vol. 2, 546–49; Hammond 1967, 370; Dakaris 1993, 8–9; Ogden 2001, 43–47.

9 The "big four" according to Ogden 2001, 43–74.

10 Graf 2006, 459; Johnston 2008, 95.

11 Friese 2010a and 2013.

12 Hermione: Pausanias 2.35.10; Lerna: Pausanias 2.46.7; Erinios near Eleusis: Pausanias 1.38.5; Mt. Laphystios near Coroneia: Pausanias 9.34.5; Troezen: Pausanias 2.31.2; Pylos: Pausanias 6.25.2–3.

connected to the myth of Herakles dragging up the monster Kerberos or to the rape of Demeter's daughter Kore by the Underworld god Hades.[13] The entrances could be located along the road or, as in Hermione in the Argolid, Peloponnese, right next to the agora. Generally they were described as natural chasms into the ground, which could be fenced in if necessary but otherwise lacked any specific architecture. They were known (and shown by the locals) as the location of a myth but not of a particular ritual or cult. Only a few Underworld entrances were places of worship. By looking at the most famous examples this article will discuss if the dead themselves were venerated at these sites, usually consulted as an oracle by the performance of the rites of evocation.[14]

The nekyomanteion *of Ephyra*. Apart from Homer, the oldest frequently cited 'historical' account of the existence of the Thesprotian death oracle is Herodotos' tale of the dreadful Corinthian tyrant Periander, who sent messengers to "the Thesprotians on the river Acheron to ask the oracle of the dead about a deposit made with him by a guest-friend."[15] In this short passage Herodotos neither mentions the exact location nor the topography of this oracle site. Apparently he has never visited it himself. Furthermore, the reference to the *nekyomanteion* is very brief. Herodotos might in fact have used the term as an illustration to emphasize the cruelty and ridiculousness of the tyrant Periander, rather than to describe a historical site.[16]

Pausanias is also frequently taken as 'proof' of the Acheron *nekyomanteion*, but looking at his rare accounts of the oracle site, it becomes obvious that not only had he never been there in person, he also questions the existence of the place itself. Visiting Mount Helicon in Boeotia, he described a statue of Orpheus and only briefly mentioned that "others have said that his wife died before him, and that for her sake he came to Aornum in Thesprotis, where

13 Herakles at Hermione: Pausanias 2.35.10; at Mt. Laphystios near Coroneia: Pausanias 9.34.5; at Troezen: Pausanias 2.31.2; at Pylos: Pausanias 6.25.2–3; at Tainaron: Sophocles, *Hercles at Tainaron*, fr. 224–34; Herakleia: Xenophon, *Anabasis* 6.2.2; Diodoros of Sicily 14.13; Pomponius Mela 1.103. Kore in Sicily: Diodoros of Sicily 5.1–4; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5. 285–429; at Lerna: Pausanias 2.46.7; at Erinios near Eleusis: Pausanias 1.38.5; at Kyzikos: Propertius 3.22.1–4; in Crete: Bacchylides fr. 46. See also the contribution by Verbanck-Piérard in this volume.

14 For a more intensive discussion of the particular sites, see Ogden 2001, 1–75 and Friese 2010b, 78–83; 2010a and 2013.

15 Herodotos 5.92: πέμψαντι γάρ οἱ ἐς Θεσπρωτοὺς ἐπ᾽ Ἀχέροντα ποταμὸν ἀγγέλους ἐπὶ τὸ νεκυομαντήιον παρακαταθήκης πέρι ξεινικῆς οὔτε σημανέειν ἔφη. Trans. Macaulay.

16 Necromancy was a common topic also in Attic comedy, as e.g. the *psychagogia* scene in Aristophanes' *Birds* (1553–64) or the *katabasis* in his *Frogs* demonstrate.

of old was an oracle of the dead."[17] This passage shows that the author is not describing a particular historical site on his way through Greece, but a mythological one, illustrating Orpheus' search for Eurydike. Pausanias' own doubts become even more obvious in an earlier passage describing his visit to the sanctuary of Theseus in the Agora of Athens. As Theseus was once kept prisoner by the Thesprotian king, Pausanias described a few sites of this kingdom:

> near Kichyros is a lake called Acherousia, and a river called Acheron. There is also Kokytos, a most unlovely stream. I believe it was because Homer had seen these places that he made bold to describe in his poems the regions of Hades, and gave to the rivers there the names of those in Thesprotia.[18]

Though neither Herodotos nor Pausanias described an active or former cult site that they inspected themselves, but were rather inspired by a myth or poem, modern researchers have frequently used their accounts to identify the site of Odysseus' consultation of the dead seer Teiresias. In the middle of the twentieth century, S. Dakaris excavated a Hellenistic vaulted crypt underneath the monastery of St. John Prodromos at Mesopotamo and identified the structure as the location where Odysseus' death oracle took place (*Figure 10.2*).[19] Dakaris reconstructed a labyrinth-like sanctuary, dedicated to the Underworld goddess Persephone, whose seventh- to fifth-century BCE statuettes were found inside the building and in a deposit of figurines, found 100 metres down the hill. He argued that the enquirers were left in complete darkness for several hours, performing purification and sacrifice, before being let into an inner chamber, where they were supposed to meet the dead. Parts of several iron wheels, which were found in this area, were reconstructed as a *deus ex machina* device, used by the priests for a dramatic illumination of the appearance of the dead.

However convincing Dakaris' argumentation might be, the site lacked any inscription or dedication which might identify it as a *nekyomanteion*. The Corinthian pottery from the seventh to the fifth century BCE found all over the site does not instantly indicate a close connection to Corinth and the tyrant

17 Pausanias 9.30.6.

18 Pausanias 1.17.5: πρὸς δὲ τῇ Κιχύρῳ λίμνη τέ ἐστιν Ἀχερουσία καλουμένη καὶ ποταμὸς Ἀχέρων, ῥεῖ δὲ καὶ Κωκυτὸς ὕδωρ ἀτερπέστατον. Ὅμηρός τέ μοι δοκεῖ ταῦτα ἑωρακὼς ἔς τε τὴν ἄλλην ποίησιν ἀποτολμῆσαι τῶν ἐν Ἅιδου καὶ δὴ καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα τοῖς ποταμοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν Θεσπρωτίδι θέσθαι. Trans. W. H. S. Jones.

19 See Dakaris 1993, with older bibliography.

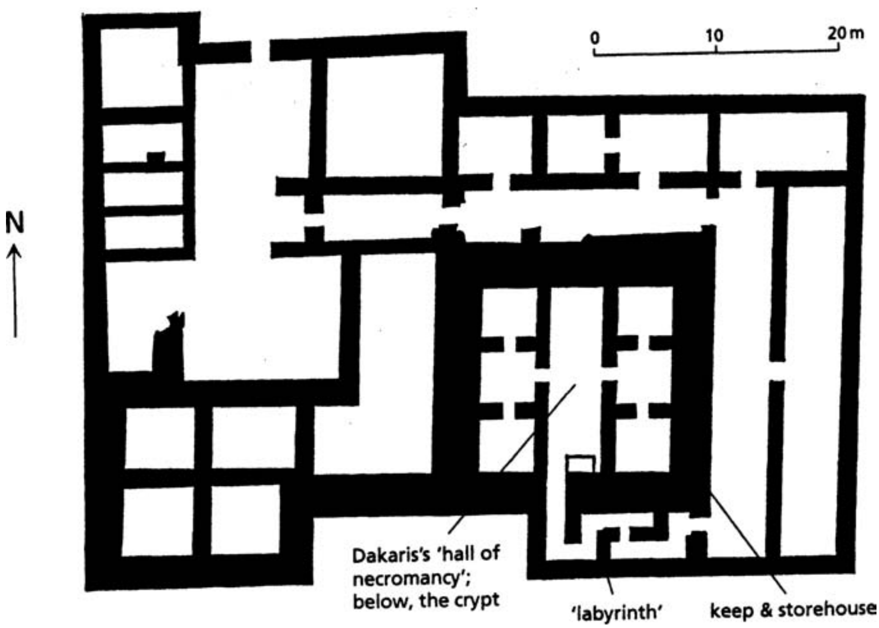


FIGURE 10.2 *Hellenistic structure beneath St. John Prodomos at Mesopotamo.* AFTER DAKARIS 1993, 15.

Periander, as Dakaris suggested.[20] However, although the German archaeologist D. Baatz[21] in the 1980s proposed a completely different interpretation of the complex – he believed that the superstructure belongs to a Hellenistic fortification, the vaulted chamber was used as a central storage room and the iron wheels were part of catapults, which were burnt when the building was finally destroyed by the Romans in the second century BCE – the modern visitor is still confronted with the necromantic past of the site.[22]

The nekyomantion *of Heracleia.* Herakleia Pontike on the southern shore of the Black Sea is known as one of the many locations where Herakles dragged up the Underworld dog Kerberos.[23] In the fifth century BCE Xenophon wrote in his *Anabasis* that the Acherusian Chersonese, where Herakles is said to have

20 Dakaris 1960.

21 Baatz 1999.

22 E.g. in various internet descriptions of the place: http://www.visit-preveza.com/nekromantio.

23 In 560 BCE the Megarians established a colony at this place, naming it Herakleia, because Herakles fought against the Underworld dog Kerberos here, see Xenophon, *Anabasis* 6.2.2; Diodoros of Sicily 14.13; Pomponius Mela 1.103.

descended to Hades after Kerberos, is a spot where they showed the marks of his descent, reaching to a depth "of more than two stadia."[24] Plutarch mentioned Herakleia as the place where the Spartan regent Pausanias "fled to the *nekyomanteion*" to call up his inadvertently killed bride Kleonike.[25] Finally the Late Antique writer Quintus of Smyrna described "a marvellous cave […] with water running through and niches all around […] a broad chasm has been made that goes down as far as the pit of high-minded Hades."[26]

Following Quintus' text, in 1966 W. Hoepfner located the site in the middle of three caves on the south side of the so-called Acheron Valley, south of the modern Turkish city of Karadeniz Eregli.[27] Today a narrow *dromos*-like entrance leads over a twisting stairway to a platform and a roughly rectangular chamber, which is mostly flooded by water over a meter deep (*Figure 10.3*). The walls are apparently worked, at least on the eastern side of the chamber. Small half-round niches are cut into three of the walls. Architectural fragments indicate that there may have been other structures in front of the cave as well as within the chamber.[28] Another narrow tunnel leads from the northwest end of the chamber to a small low unworked cave, where human bones from the Middle Ages were deposited. Apart from this survey, no further investigations took place which could clarify the function of the site and until today no dedications or inscriptions demonstrate a necromantic cult at this location, neither do the literary sources: Xenophon mentioned the Herakleian entrance to Hades as a kind of tourist site, though he did not indicate any sanctuary or cult here. Plutarch might simply have used the atmosphere of the necromantic ritual to illustrate the cruelty of the tyrant Pausanias, who first killed his bride and then repented of it. Finally, Quintus of Smyrna, though writing about an entrance to Hades, also did not use the specific term *nekyomanteion*. He rather stated that "it is a sacred cave of all the nymphs who live over the long hills of Paphlagonia and that in the niches stone craters and Pans and lovely nymphs and looms and […] the products of all the crafts of men"[29] were on display.

24 Xenophon, *Anabasis*. 6.2.2. Trans. Brownson.

25 Plutarch, *Moralia* 555c. This episode is usually dated to 479–477 BCE, which has led most scholars to the assumption that there was a "nekuomanteion already established" in the 5th c. BCE, see Hoepfner, 1972, 46; Ogden, 2001, 29, n. 1.

26 Quintus of Smyrna, *Post-Homerica* 6.469–91.

27 Hoepfner 1966, 2 and 21; 1972, 41–46.

28 Hoepfner 1972, 45–46 suggested that the alcove housed a cult statue of Herakles. The architectural fragments may have derived from a temple.

29 Quintus Smyrnaeus, *Post-Homerica* 6.469–91. Nymphs were frequently worshipped in caves, the most important might have been the Vari cave in Attica, see Weller 1903.

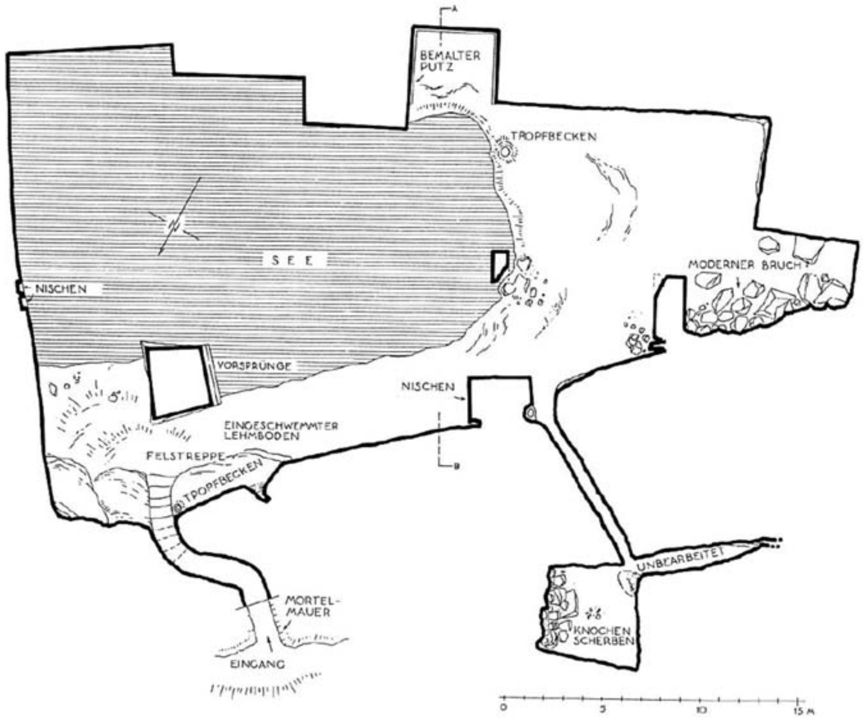


FIGURE 10.3 *Heracleia Pontic. Cave II.*
AFTER HOEPFNER 1972, PLAN 5.

The psychopompeion *of Tainaron*. Another place where Herakles was said to have met Kerberos at the entrance to Hades was the cave of Tainaron.[30] Plutarch mentioned a *psychopompeion* at Tainaron[31] and Roman authors also associated this site with Orpheus descending into the Underworld.[32] According to Pomponius Mela, the cave was located in a bay close to the tip of a promontory. It was surrounded by a grove in the vicinity of a temple of Poseidon.[33] Pausanias mentioned an entrance to Hades, which looked like a temple "made like a cave" with a statue of Poseidon in front of it. Further he was disappointed that there was "no path down into the underground from

30 Sophocles, *Herakles at Tainaron* fr. 224–34; Strabo 8.5.1; Apollodoros, *Bibliotheka* 2.15.1; Pausanias 3.25.4–5.

31 Plutarch, *Moralia* 560e–f. In a tale in Suda, s.v. Archilochos (*Aelian* fr. 83 = Archilochus T170 Tarditi), Apollo sends Archilochos to Tainaron to propitiate the soul of the son of Telesikles and to render him friendly with libations.

32 Vergil, *Georgics* 4.467; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.13; Seneca, *Hercules furens* 587.

33 Pomponius Mela 1.103.

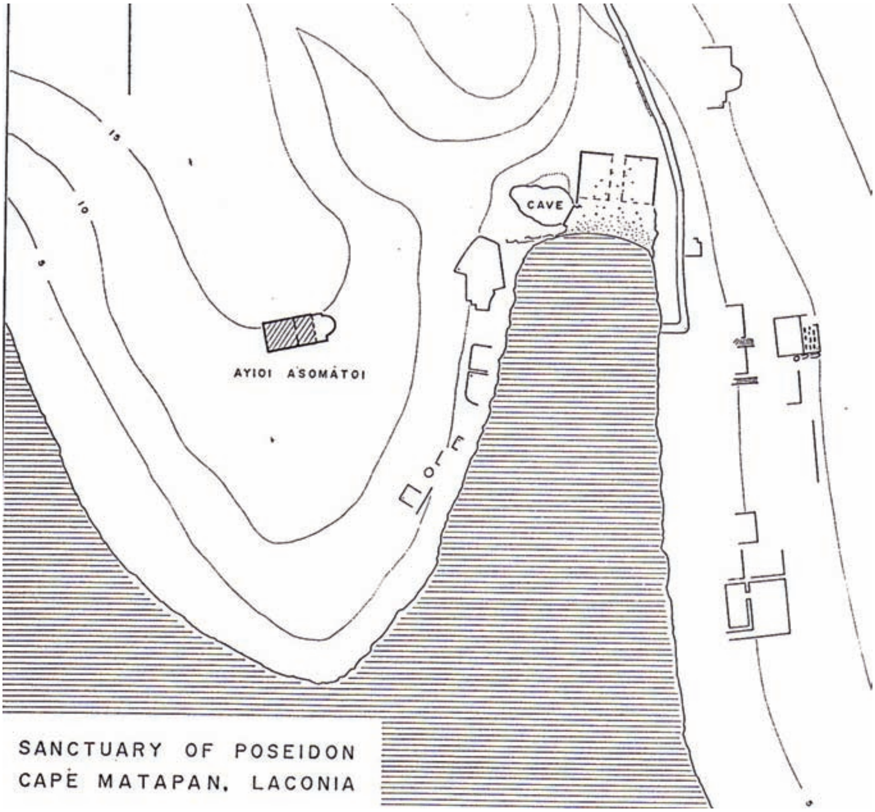


FIGURE 10.4 *Tainaron.*
AFTER CUMMER 1978, 36–37.

there."[34] He does not say anything about a specific (necromantic) ritual in which he might have participated.

Modern scholarship has frequently situated the sanctuary at the north end of the Sternis Bay at the very tip of the Mani peninsula (*Figure 10.4*).[35] What we find here today are the remains of a small cave above the beach, 50 metres below a vaulted structure, probably Hellenistic. The Christian chapel built on the hill above this structure was dedicated to the *Agioi Asōmatoi*, "the bodiless saints," which might refer to ancient ghosts.[36] The cave at the beach is 15 metres deep and 10–12 metres wide; the roof has collapsed. A two metre thick ashlar wall, built on rock-cut foundations and fitted with a doorway, closed off the entrance probably to hide the ritual being performed

34 Pausanias 3.25.
35 Cummer 1978, 35–43; Schumacher 1993, 62–87; Ogden 2001, 34–42; Mylonopoulos 2006.
36 Ogden 2001, 35.

inside the cave. East of the entrance the natural rock has been trimmed to form a terrace, where other (cultic) buildings might have been erected. F. Bölte stated that the oracle clients underwent purification rituals in the larger building on the west side of the terrace before they entered the cave through a door in its western wall.[37] In front of the foundations there were cuttings for the erection of statues and stelai with the records of the sanctuary – none of which mention a death oracle.[38] Moreover, remains of several buildings, (probably used for storage and/or accommodation of people visiting the sanctuary) all around the bay rather suggest that the Poseidon sanctuary, which was also known as an asylum and as the centre of a *koinon*, must have been a very busy place.[39] It can therefore be questioned if the relatively small cave really was the venue of a death oracle; it may just have been shown to visitors as the 'entrance to Hades' and the location of the Herakles-Kerberos myth.

Lake Avernus near Cumae. A fourth traditional setting for a *nekyomanteion* and the location of Odysseus' necromantic ritual is Lake Avernus, a flooded volcanic crater, located about 20km east of Naples. Sophocles referred to it as "a *nekyomanteion* on a Tyrsenian lake."[40] Indeed the scenery seems to be perfect for an entrance to the Underworld: the surrounding Phlegraean fields are full of active volcanic fumaroles, hot springs and mephitic gases. The slopes of the hills surrounding the lake are covered with dark forest and the soft tufa rock abounds in natural and man-made caves. Although many scholars have searched for the Acheron *nekyomanteion* here, they have all until now been proven wrong. A huge vaulted chamber, the so-called *Grotta della Sibilla*, at the south side of the lake has turned out to be a military supply tunnel, and an underground labyrinth-like system at the Roman resort of Baiae was probably not used, as stated by R. Paget, as a death oracle, but as the warm water supply of the nearby bath.[41] Finally, Strabo's text, often cited as a evidence for a

37 Bölte 1932, 2038.

38 Only two late Spartan inscriptions record a prophet (*mantis*) of Poseidon at Tainaron, but he was based in the city, see *IG* V 210 and 211.

39 As Plutarch wrote, the sanctuary was the goal of a theoria from Corinth and the venue of a three day festival (*Moralia* 160d). The participants and visitors would need accomodation and food. From the 2nd c. BCE onwards the sancutary was the centre of a *koinon*, see Mylonopoulos 2006, 140–46. For the amphictiony at Tainaron, see also Sinn 2000, 239.

40 Sophocles fr. 748.

41 *Grotta della Sibilla*: Maiuri 1963, 155–57; Amalfitano 1990, 174–75. Baiae: Paget 1967. I would like to thank Inge Nielsen for discussing the underground supply system of the Baiae baths with me.

nekyomanteion at Lake Avernus,[42] should rather be seen in a more critical way, since the author himself clearly doubted the historical background of such a sanctuary: "People prior to my time were wont to make Avernus the setting of the fabulous story of the Homeric 'Nekyia'; and, what is more, writers tell us that there actually was an oracle of the dead here and that Odysseus visited it."[43]

We may conclude that although the above discussed archaeological material and sites have frequently been associated with a death cult or a necromantic ritual, no inscriptions or dedications support such a function at any period in antiquity. Nor does the literary material attest to any ancient author's participation in such a ritual or the consultation of a death oracle. It is more likely that the written accounts mentioning a *nekyomanteion* used the term as a topos to describe a particular mythical or even frightening topography (Herodotos). Others (Pausanias, Strabo) utilized the term to intensify the atmosphere of a myth. It can therefore be argued – at least until new excavations reveal new evidence – that none of these sites functioned as a necromantic sanctuary in Antiquity. Some of them (Tainaron, Herakleia) might have been shown – like most of the other entrances to Hades – as formerly active but now mythical cult locations. Others (Ephyra, Lake Avernus) existed only in the oral and written traditions. While private necromancy was a widely established ritual practised throughout Antiquity by individuals and self-appointed experts, it probably never took place in the institutionalized form of a sanctuary.[44]

Mediators between Life and Death

The Underworld was an eerie but fascinating place and the seemingly unlimited knowledge of the dead was too tantalizing not to use it for divinatory purposes. Therefore the following examples will illustrate a group of cults attested

42 Strabo 5.4.5 including Ephorus *FGrHist* 70 F134a. Paget 1967, 102; Ogden 2001, 61–64. Ogden reads this as a proof for a *nekyomanteion* here. That the natural scenery of the environment already attracted people to believe in superstitious stories is shown by the so-called Sibyl's cave underneath the acropolis of nearby Cumae. This 50m man-made tunnel with three cisterns at the east and closable window-like openings at the western seaside, ends in front of a vaulted chamber, which could be closed by an iron door. It was probably used as a military supply tunnel in Hellenistic times, but was already shown to ancient tourists as the mythical oracle place of the Sibyl, see Maiuri 1958; Pagano 1985–1986; Clark 1977.

43 Strabo 5.4.5 including Ephorus *FGrHist* 70 F134a. Trans. H. Leonard.

44 Graf 1997, 118–74; Ogden 2001, 116–27; Magini 2015.

in the historical period, which used the same mantic ritual and topography that was mythically associated with the *nekyomanteia*, but instead of the dead, a mediating divinity, either the god Plouton himself or a hero or *daimōn* was worshipped.

The Oracle of Trophonios at Lebadeia. Ritually as well as mythologically closely related to the death oracles, though never described with the term *nekyomanteion,* were the cults of deified (dead) heroes. Usually they were established at the site of the hero's real or mythical burial place, or the place where a hero had descended into the earth.[45] Apart from the healing cult of Amphiaraos of Oropos, north of Athens,[46] a popular place to get in contact with a hero, there was the sanctuary of Trophonios, established in the sixth century BCE in the Boeotian town Lebadeia and reorganized in Hellenistic times.[47] According to myth, Trophonios was an architect who was assigned to build a treasure chamber for king Hyrieus of Boeotia together with his brother Agamedes. Using a secret entrance, they tried to steal the king's fortune, but Hyrieus laid a trap, in which Agamedes was caught and later killed. Trophonios fled into a cave at Lebadeia and disappeared forever. Pausanias gave a very detailed description of the sanctuary and the ritual, as he obviously inquired of the oracle himself.[48] Also several epigraphic attestations from the fifth century BCE onwards from all over the modern town mention the hero and the location of his sanctuary.

According to Pausanias, the grove of Trophonios was separated from the city by the river Herkyna (*Figure 10.5*). There were many temples inside the *temenos* for different gods (Apollo, Demeter, Zeus and Trophonios), but also a hospice and the so-called "*bothros* of Agamedes," where the oracle client would sacrifice before he went to the oracle cave to meet the hero:

> [...] the oracle is on the mountain above the sacred grove. A platform of white stone has been built around it [...] Within an enclosure is a chasm in the earth, not natural, but artificially constructed. The shape is like that of a potter's kiln [...] They have not made a way down to the bottom [...] they bring a narrow portable ladder [...] After going down, one finds a hole between the construction and the bottom.[49]

45 Ekroth 2002, 228–34; 254–57 and 276–80; see also Kearns 1992. For oracles at burial places and in graveyards, see Ogden 2001, 3–16.

46 Terranova 2013 with older bibliography.

47 Bonnechere 2003; see also Turner 1994 and Friese 2010b, 50–52.

48 Pausanias 9.39.4; see also Plutarch, *Moralia* 590–92.

49 Pausanias 9.39.9–12. For the ritual, see Clark 1968; Bonnechere 2003.



FIGURE 10.5 *Canyon of Lebadeia.*
PHOTOGRAPH: WIEBKE FRIESE.

Following Pausanias' description we may imagine an entrance with impressive architecture that probably covered a natural cave of at least two chambers. Unfortunately the area has been densely populated since Antiquity and until today no noteworthy architectural remains have been excavated. So far three different locations for the oracle cave have been suggested: underneath the Byzantine fort next to the Herkyna River at the entrance to the canyon, in a chapel on the steep mountainside at its back and next to the Hellenistic temple of Zeus Basileus and on the top of the mountain, which was excavated by local archaeologists some years ago.[50] No archaeological or epigraphical material could prove these hypotheses for certain. Only recently, Lee Ann Turner and Pierre Bonnechere convincingly proposed that, at least in Roman times, the sanctuary must have been divided into three main parts: the sacred source and grove in the canyon, the "official" buildings on the acropolis on the top of

50 Waszink 1968, 23–30; Vallas and Faraklas 1969, 228–32.

the mountain and the oracle cave "somewhere in between."[51] Wherever the physical remains of the sanctuary might have been located, inscriptions and dedications as well as Pausanias' account of his own experiences show that the Trophonios oracle was well established in Classical times and even more so in the Roman period.

The plutonia *of Acharaka and Hierapolis*. The so-called *charonia* or *plutonia* were a group of sanctuaries located along the river Meander in Asia Minor, where the tufa rock slopes are interspersed with many natural caves. Though these sanctuaries were sacred to the god Plouton and therefore mythically connected to the Underworld, and though they were all located in a natural cave or cave-like structure, none of the ancient authors describing these sites mentioned a gate or entrance to Hades.[52] Neither was it possible to get in personal contact with the dead here. Instead, especially in Roman times, the vapours which arose from caves in this area gave reason for spectacular orchestrations which attracted many visitors to the sites. The vapours were said to be dangerous to all people other than the priests, but in the case of the sanctuary of Acharaka – about 5km west of the ancient Nysa – the vapours also had healing powers. Here Strabo described a temple for Plouton and Kore next to a holy grove and the *charonion*, a cave "by nature wonderful."[53] Ill people either stayed in the sanctuary for several days and let the priest sleep in the cave on their behalf to find a cure for their disease,[54] or they were "left in the cave, to remain in quiet, like animals in their lurking-holes, without food for many days."[55] Early excavations revealed the remains of a peripteral limestone temple (6 x 12 columns) possibly built in Hellenistic times.[56] Next to the temple there are several vaulted structures at the edge of a small canyon. It leads to an open cave with walls that show several man-made structures. Yellow sediment next to a small river at the bottom of the canyon might indicate a high level of sulphur in the water, which is typical for healing sources.[57] However, Acharaka was not only known for its healing power. Most popular were the annual festivals, when the priests let bulls into the cave. The animals then collapsed and

51 Turner 1994, 468; Bonnechere 2003, 32.
52 E.g. Strabo 14.1.44; Strabo 12.8.17; Pliny, *Natural History* 2, 207; Appian, *De Mundo* 327.
53 Strabo 14.1.44.
54 Incubation was a very common ritual in ancient Greek healing cults, especially that of Asklepios, see von Ehrenheim 2009 and 2016.
55 Strabo 14.1.44.
56 Diest 1913, 57–62.
57 Many springs connected to a healing sanctuary had a high level of sulphur, which was said to be good for the nerves and the body. Vitruvius, *De Architectura* 8.4.

died immediately.[58] This ritual demonstrated the power and the dangers of the vapours to men and animals.

Even more famous was a similar spectacle in the *plutonium* of Hierapolis, about a day's journey to the east down the Meander valley. Again Strabo described the site as being an "opening of only moderate size, large enough to admit a man, but it reaches a considerable depth, [...] and this space is full of a vapour so misty and dense that one can scarcely see the ground."[59] For many years, archaeologists associated the place with a tunnel right next to the temple of Apollo to the south of the theatre of Hierapolis.[60] In 2013, F. D'Andria excavated further south a complex with a round temple, a water pool and a sunken courtyard flanked by Ionic columns, two of them inscribed with the names of Plouton and Kore (*Figure 10.6a–b*). Above the courtyard a theatre-like structure was cut into the rocky slope. D'Andria also found two statues of Kerberos and a snake in the water pool, which underline that the cave was seen as connected with the entrance to Hades.[61] Even today, the lower courtyard is full of carbon dioxide fumes, which usually stay near the ground, as the gas is heavier than oxygen.[62] This is why the air was not toxic for the spectators who probably stood on the theatre-like steps above the cave.

However, while the ancient visitors obviously connected Acharaka and Hierapolis with an entrance to the Underworld, neither the archaeological nor the literary sources relate an active oracle at this place.[63] Pliny mentioned Hierapolis as a place "which kills all those who enter it. And [...] where no one can enter with safety, except the priest of the great Mother of the Gods." [64] He continued, that "in *other* places (except Hierapolis) there are prophetic caves, where those who are intoxicated with the vapour which rises from them predict future events, as at the most noble of all oracles, Delphi." Also Strabo does not mention a prophetic ritual, when he noted:

> Now to those who approach the handrail anywhere round the enclosure the air is harmless, since the outside is free from that vapor in calm

58 As depicted on coins from Magnesia and Nysa, D'Andria 2013, 180, fig. 27.

59 Strabo 13.4.13.

60 Beginning with Carettoni 1963–1964, 441; Verzone 1978, 391–475.

61 D'Andria 2013. Inscription: D'Andria 2013, 171, fig. 20. For the location at the Apollo temple, see Carettoni, 1963–1964; Verzone 1978.

62 http://www.seeker.com/gate-to-hell-guardians-recovered-in-turkey-1768061838.html

63 There was e.g. a letter oracle at the nearby temple of Apollo, see Friese 2010b, 103.

64 Pliny, *Natural History* 2, 207, trans. J. Bostock. While the inscriptions relate to a cult of Kore and Plouton at this site, the priests conducting the spectacle were called *galli* and therefore connected to the goddess Cybele.

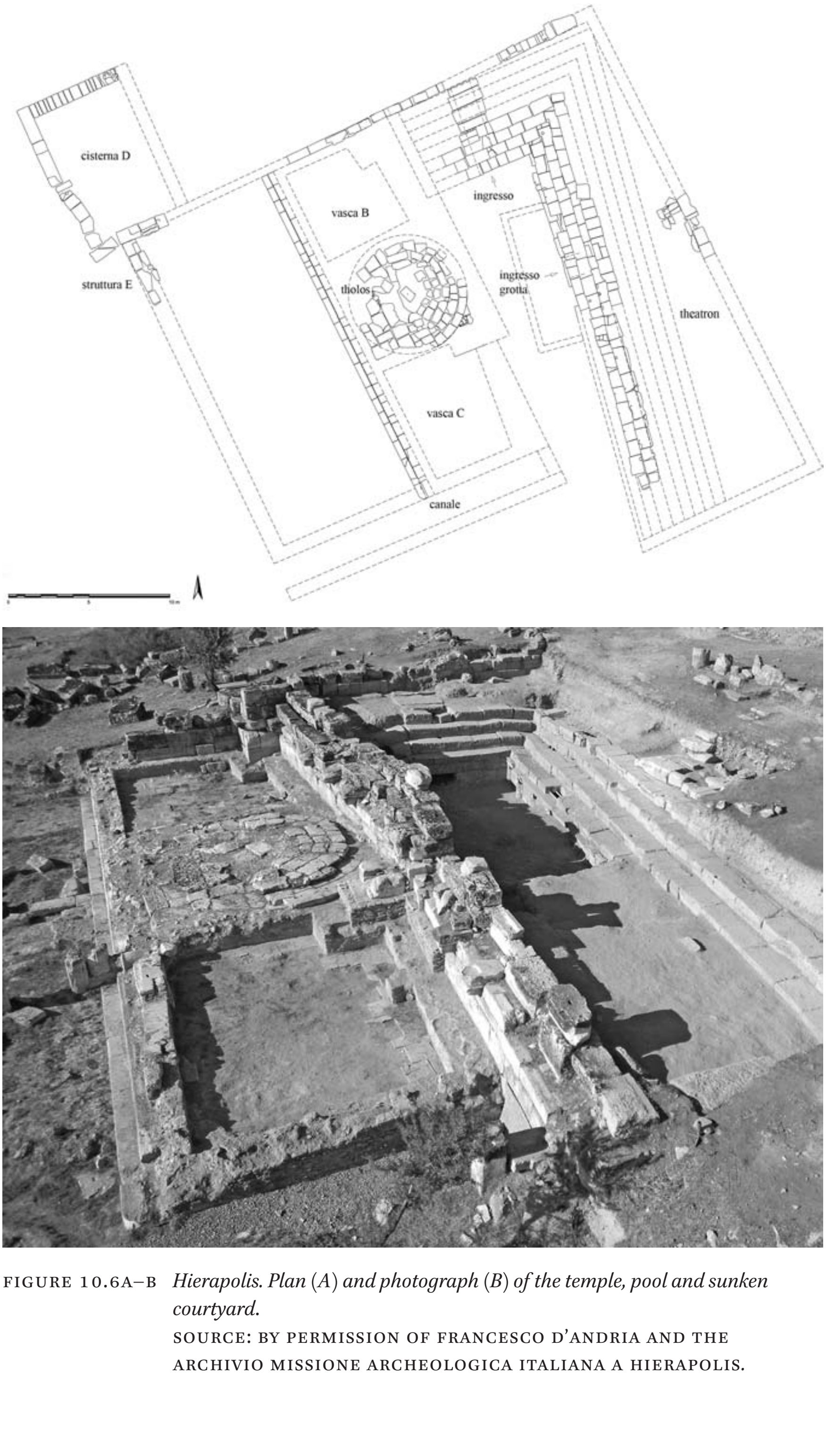


FIGURE 10.6A–B *Hierapolis. Plan (A) and photograph (B) of the temple, pool and sunken courtyard.*
SOURCE: BY PERMISSION OF FRANCESCO D'ANDRIA AND THE ARCHIVIO MISSIONE ARCHEOLOGICA ITALIANA A HIERAPOLIS.

> weather, for the vapor then stays inside the enclosure, but any animal that passes inside meets instant death. At any rate, bulls that are led into it fall and are dragged out dead; and I threw in sparrows and they immediately breathed their last and fell.[65]

As in Acharaka, the spectacular ritual itself seemed to be the attraction of the site, which obviously did not have a particular religious aim or background, either healing or prophetic.

The Bes Oracle in Abydos. The attraction of mystical oracle sites lasted well into Late Antiquity. In the Egyptian sanctuary of Abydos on the western shore of the Nile, graffiti and pyramidal texts attest an oracle of Osiris-Sarapis as early as the late Ptolemaic period.[66] During the Roman and Late Antique periods, the cult was adopted by the *daimōn* or god Bes. The general toponym Abydos refers to numerous archaeological sites, including several necropoleis and temples from the late fourth millennium BCE onwards, with the temple and tomb of the mythical pharaoh Osiris in the centre.[67] However, all monuments are concentrated in the southern part of the wide valley, which is bordered by steep slopes that ascend to the high desert plateau (*Figure 10.7*). In its southwest corner the wadi Umm el-Quaab cuts through the slopes. Since earliest times this place was considered a gate to the Egyptian Underworld and a central focus of several rituals and processions. Such processions probably started at the Osiris temple, situated at the edge of the cultivation zone, and passed the tomb of Osiris and a hill located further south, which is still covered in pottery deposited here as offerings since the sixth century BCE.[68] For most people, this was the end of the procession, as only initiated priests could continue until the entrance to the wadi.

So far, no excavations have been conducted there, but Andreas Effland has been surveying the area with the "Osiris Project" from the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in Cairo since 2006. The only manmade structure he described is a small cave in the slope – which he suggested to be an eremitic house from early medieval times.[69] Travellers from the beginning of the twentieth century mentioned a door-relief in the rock directly at the entrance of the wadi, but due to the heavy rainfalls in spring time, when the whole bay becomes flooded, and the ever changing sand during the rest of the year, it

65 Strabo 13.4.13. Trans. H. L. Jones.

66 Effland and Effland 2013, 126–29; Effland 2014.

67 Effland 2014, 193, and more generally O'Connor 2009.

68 Effland and Effland 2013 (with older bibliography); Effland 2014, 193; Bortolani 2015.

69 Effland 2014. I thank Andreas Effland for discussing his survey results with me.

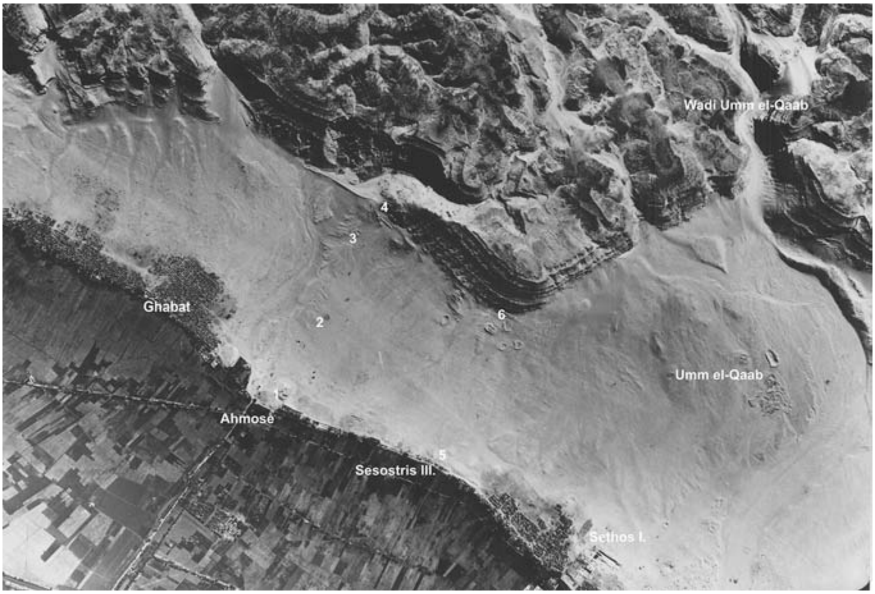


FIGURE 10.7. *Abydos-south and Umm el–Qaab. Aerial photo from the 1950s. Nos. are the 1–4 sacred complexes of the Ahmose complex, nos. 5–6 those of Senusret III.* PHOTOGRAPH: DAI-KAIRO AND EFFLAND 2014, FIG.1.

has not yet been re-located by modern archaeologists. According to Effland, this might have been a symbol for the entrance to the Underworld carved into the rock in ancient times. However, only the priests were allowed to follow the path to the wadi. Whatever ritual took place at this mythical location, it was not visible to the worshippers, who had to stay in the sanctuary, as this area was sacred and forbidden territory for them. What people believed to happen when the procession of priests reached the entrance to the Underworld is suggested e.g. in the *Book of Traversing Eternity*, which was written in Ptolemaic times: "You will worship (Osiris) in his reliquary [...] you will pass through the gates of 'uplifter of millions' (the necropolis of Abydos) and you will open up the ways in the Underworld of the god [...]."[70] As the worshippers could not approach Osiris at the gate to the Underworld itself (the wadi), they contacted him inside the sanctuary of Sethi I, a less sacred (but still sacred and not domestic) area (*Figure 10.8*). Further, they did not contact the deity directly but through a mediator, the *daimōn* Bes. Inside the sanctuary of Sethi I, much graffiti related to Bes and dream oracles was found, mainly on the roof and on

70 Smith 2009, 407–8.



FIGURE 10.8 *Abydos. Reconstruction of Temple Sethi I, view from the west. The graffiti referring to Bes are located on the western exterior wall of the temple on the axis through the desert pylon.*
SOURCE: GRAPHIC BY JAN P. GRAEFF, HAMBURG.

the western exterior wall of the temple – directed towards the desert and the entrance to the wadi. They were scratched into the wall at a height of c. 80cm, which could suggest a sitting or even lying position of the oracle clients.[71] The ritual itself was conducted individually, but the preparations before and the interpretation after a dream oracle were well organized and guided by the priests.[72] The Greek magical papyri gave precise instructions for the further rituals. First the oracle seeker had to bring a bone or cloth of a dead person.[73] Then "draw on your left hand Bes(a) [...] Put around your hand a black cloth of Isis and go to sleep without giving answer to anyone. The remainder of the cloth wrap around your neck [...]." At sunset he had to pray to Helios/Bes:

> [...] hear, blessed one, for I call you who rule heaven and earth, Chaos and Hades, where men's daimons dwell who once gazed on the light [...] If you go to the depths of the earth and search the regions of the dead, send this daimon, from whose body I hold this remnant in my hands [...] at midnight hours.[74]

71 Rutherford 2003, 184–85; Effland 2014, 200; Bortolani 2015.

72 Effland 2014, 200–1.

73 *PGM* VIII 64–69, trans. Betz. This was not a problem at Abydos, as the surrounding desert was full of them, see Effland 2014, 199. Maybe bones were also sold in front of the temple.

74 *PGM* IV 435–501.

Then the oracle seeker had to lay down on a mat, with an unbaked brick beside his head, waiting for the dreams.[75]

Futher, in Abydos, nobody was entering the gates to the Underworld in person, but rather called a mediator, the *daimōn* Bes or the god Helios to help him, while staying in the secure precinct of Sethi I. Nevertheless, the vicinity of the "real" entrance to the Underworld was of high importance, as it guaranteed the authenticity of the cult. That the Bes oracle of Abydos was famous well into Roman times is evident from the fourth-century historian Ammianus Marcellinus, who in 359 CE reports that the site was so important that its answers were even of interest to the emperor Constantine II in Rome.[76]

Conclusions

In Graeco-Roman antiquity many poleis and extraurban sanctuaries had their very own entrances to the Underworld. Usually these were natural chasms into the ground which were displayed as the location of the Herakles or Kore/Plouton myths but were not the focus for any particular ritual or cult. Therefore, and against the commonly held opinion, the myth of Odysseus' *nekyomanteion* was probably also never based on a historical and institutionalized ritual topography.[77] Although the natural environment of the relevant sites might mislead to a modern association with a death oracle, no archaeological material, inscriptions or dedications demonstrate an active necromantic sanctuary at any place or any time in Antiquity.[78] Neither does any literary description of a site show that the author himself participated in a necromantic ritual at one of these locations or that he was even recording a historical event.

We have to consider that throughout Antiquity necromancy was certainly practised,[79] though it was officially regarded as something rather strange or creepy that belonged to the sphere of ignorance, superstition and

75 *PGM* VIII 104.

76 Ammianus Marcellinus 19.12.8.

77 According to Ekroth 2002, 254 Odysseus' blood ritual "can scarcely be considered as reflecting any contemporaneous rituals performed to the dead." Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 77–83.

78 We also know nothing about the resident priests at the oracle of dead, though we know about privileges of the priests at the oracle of Trophonios, e.g. Plutarch's brother Lamprias, see Plutarch, *Moralia* 431c–d; Pausanias 9.39–40. See also *IG* VII 3426.

79 On the localization and evocation of ghosts, see for example Suda, s.v. (*peri*) *psychagogias*.

"hocus-pocus."[80] Professional necromancers were portrayed as a curious group, living a miserable life at the edge of the world or having devious criminal potential.[81] People consulting them were somewhat desperate or at any rate adventurous. The direct confrontation with the dead was something that took place in secrecy or at least in privacy, but not in an institutionalized sanctuary.[82] Therefore, in literature the term *nekyomanteion* was rather used as a topos to describe a particular ancient, mythical and dark topography or to emphasize the strangeness and perfidiousness of a character or a story.[83]

However, at least in Roman times, a mystic atmosphere and ritual could obviously be advantageous for the success of a sanctuary, as it promised a particular intense experience. The anthropologist L. Meskell has suggested that religion and cult should always be considered a multi-dimensional experience in which the body of the participant acts as an "individuated site of interface and resolution between the biological, cultural and personal."[84] This multidimensionality can be influenced by particular natural and architectural features. Certainly a dark, labyrinthian cave could provoke a very tense physical and emotional experience, which could be intensified by the strongly manipulated expectation of a worshipper.[85] An initial stay in the sanctuary (as in Lebadeia or Abydos) with preparative rituals conducted by the priests was probably as efficient as the many accounts written on stelai and positioned all over the sanctuary, as well as the rumours spread about the oracle experience all over the Graeco-Roman world. Similarly important was the post-processing of the experience. The confusing dream or bewildering stay in a dark place sometimes only made sense if explained by a priest.

Moreover, since the expansion first of the Macedonian and then of the Roman Empire, the Mediterranean area was overwhelmed by many different cults, with religious competition as a logical consequence. To attract new visitors a sanctuary had to become creative. Consequently the *plutonia* in

80 Strabo 5.4.5. Also Pausanias on Tainaron 3.25.5. See also Plato's critique (*Republic* 364b–c) on *agyrtai* and *manteis* using *epagōgais* and *katadesmois*. See also Graf 2006, 459–60 and Johnston 2008, 97.

81 Hippokrates, *On the sacred disease* 6.36. 2; Libanios 41.7; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.68. See also Graf 1997, 61–88; Ogden 2001, 95–115. On Euripides, see also Dickie 2001, 31.

82 Suda, s.v. (*peri*) *psychagōgias.*

83 Cf. Periander in Herdodotos 5.92 or Pausanias in Plutarch, *Moralia* 555c. See also Johnston 2005, 292.

84 Meskell 1996, 3. For the importance of sensory experience in history see Smith 2007; in oracle cults see also: Ustinova 2009; Friese 2010b, 319–31.

85 For prehistoric caves, see Whitehouse 2001.

the Meander valley focused on the cruel but spectacular demonstrations of the deadly vapours in this area; the Trophonios oracle of Lebadeia canvassed customers with the proverb that the pessimistic "consulted the oracle of Trophonios"[86]; while the Egyptian Bes oracle benefited from the mysterious atmosphere of the Abydos' necropolis and the nearby forbidden entrance to the Underworld.

The topography and divinatory function of these cult sites were certainly inspired by the mythical *nekyomanteia* of literature. However, none of these institutionalized sanctuaries was dedicated to the dead, but to a kind of mediating god (Plouton), hero (Trophonios) or *daimōn* (Bes). Since death, ghosts and magic in general were subjects of many attitudes also in Antiquity, a mediator made the ritual experience safer and less frightening for the oracle clients, as they could rely on somebody to help them through the ritual, to protect them from danger and to gain their prophecy. Last but not least, the priests of a sanctuary, who had to make sure that the paying clients would get what they expected, had a strong interest in influencing the ritual by not relying on something as trustworthy as a ghost.

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86 Zenobios 3.61.

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CHAPTER 11

The Sounds of *Katabasis*

Bellowing, Roaring, and Hissing at the Crossing of Impervious Boundaries

Pierre Bonnechere

In Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, a chasm, whose entrance is guarded by a bottomless lake and a dark wood, opens up into the depths of the earth.* Its emanations kill any bird that ventures above. Towards the end of the night, Aeneas offers sacrifices to the divinities of the Night.[1] At the first rays of daybreak, a well-known moment of passage,[2] the earth starts bellowing, the tips of the trees shake and the barking of Hekate's she-hounds fills the darkness.[3] At this point, the Sibyl expels all laymen from the sacred grove and commands Aeneas to follow her under the earth with courage and determination. Vergil is the quintessential ancient poet, who concentrated Greek thought through the prism of Latinity, to say nothing of its influence and reception. And on this point, he stays true to his reputation:[4] a *katabasis* is accompanied by disturbing sounds. Most of the

* I thank Gunnel Ekroth and Ingela Nilsson for their invitation. Some ideas in this paper I partly owe to Marie-Claire Beaulieu (Tufts), Gabriela Cursaru (Montréal), Mélanie Houle (Ottawa), Ivana and Andrej Petrovic (University of Virginia), Jean-Michel Roessli (Concordia), Valérie Toillon (Tufts/Perseus and Montreal) and Annie Verbanck-Piérart (Mariemont Museum, Belgium). I owe the translation to Marie-Claire Beaulieu, kindly revised by Lynn Kozak (McGill).

1 Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.236–60 (sacrifices to Nyx, Erebos, Hekate, and Proserpine, then to Plouton).

2 *Sub limina solis* (255): the mention of *limen* reinforces the idea of transgressing a chthonic limit: Bonnechere, 2003, 71–81.

3 *Aeneid* 6.255–59: *Ecce autem primi sub limina solis et ortus / sub pedibus* ***mugire*** *solum et iuga coepta moueri / siluarum, uisaeque canes* ***ululare*** *per umbram / aduentante dea.* Trans. John Dryden 1697: "Late the nocturnal sacrifice begun, | Nor ended till the next returning sun. | Then earth began to **bellow**, trees to dance, | And howling dogs in glimm'ring light advance, | Ere Hekate came."

4 Indeed, Vergil's long description is full of sound effects topoi. For example, the monsters guarding the entrance of the Netherworld are famous for their terrifying voice (trans. Williams 1910): Kerberos (401: *aeternum latrans*, "bay ceaselessly;" 418: *latratu* […] *trifauci*, "with triple-throated roar"); Phlegeton (551: *torquetque sonantia saxa*, "which whirls along loud-thundering rocks"); Tartaros (557–58: *Hinc exaudiri gemitus, et saeva sonare / verbera;*

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images that accompany the descent to the Netherworld have been quite well mapped, but sound has not received the attention it deserves.[5] This article is work in progress that will require further investigation, especially about the relations between noisy *katabaseis* and whirls.[6]

"Bellowing" in a Religious Context: Three Examples

The starting point for this study is a cake called βοῦς, "ox," in two Byzantine lexica: "Shape of the cake given to those who descend to Trophonios, because those who went down to the *adyton* heard bellowing."[7] The *manteion* of Trophonios, in Lebadeia, is one of the only rituals labeled as a *katabasis*, as early as Herodotos (ll. 133–4), but also in Aristophanes (*Nu.* 505–9) and a fourth-century inscription (*IG* VII 3055, l. 8). My first reaction to the Byzantine commentary was a positivist one: an ox-shaped cake, why not, but the bellowing must result from an etymology drawn from the word itself, as is often the case in late *definitiones.*[8] However, a more thorough investigation

tum stridor ferri, tractaeque catenae, "Hence groans are heard, fierce cracks of lash and scourge, | Loud-clanking iron links and trailing chains"); the doors "are grating loud on hinge of sickening sound, Hell's portals open wide" (573–74: *Tum demum horrisono stridentes cardine sacrae / panduntur portae*). See also 286–89: "Centaurs are stabled there, and double shapes | Like Skylla, or the dragon Lerna bred, | With hideous scream; Briareus clutching far | His hundred hands, Chimaira girt with flame, | A crowd of Gorgons, Harpies of foul wing, | And giant triple-monstered shade [i.e. Geryon]" (*Centauri in foribus stabulant, Scyllaeque biformes,| et centumgeminus Briareus, ac belua Lernae | horrendum stridens, flammisque armata Chimaera,| Gorgones Harpyiaeque et forma tricorporis umbrae*). All of these beasts are noisy and they frighten Aeneas; 426–27: "Now hears he sobs, and piteous, lisping cries | Of souls of babes …" (*Continuo auditae voces, vagitus et ingens*, | *infantumque animae flentes* …); 571–72: "Tisiphone, with menace and affront,| The guilty swarm pursues; in her left hand| She lifts her angered serpents, while she calls| A troop of sister-furies fierce as she" (*Tisiphone quatit insultans, torvosque sinistra* | *intentans angues vocat agmina saeva sororum*).

5 On such noise in ancient Greece, literature is really scarce; see for example Segal 1994 and 1995, Strauss Clay 1992. Much more needs to be done.

6 About which a conference was held at Tufts (Mass.) in April 2015 (to be published by M.-C. Beaulieu and myself). A thorough analysis of the vocabulary, including semantic contexts, would also provide fantastic results (βοάω, βρυχάομαι, μυκάομαι, ῥοιβδέω and related words). For reasons of space, I am going to give priority to ancient sources rather to modern bibliography.

7 *Etymologicum Magnum*, s.v. βοῦς: εἶδος πλακοῦντος διδομένου τοῖς εἰς Τροφωνίου καταβαίνουσι, διότι οἱ καταβαίνοντες εἰς τὸ ἄδυτον μυκηθμῶν αἰσθάνονται (Cf. *Etymologicum Genuinum*, s.v. βοῦς. εἴρηται δέ, ὅτι οἱ καταβαίνοντες εἰς τὸ ἄδυτον μυκηθμῶν αἰσθάνονται).

8 See e.g. Luhtala 2002.

forbids this rather facile position.[9] The association between bellowing and the oracle of Trophonios is well documented in Plutarch's *On the Genius of Socrates* (*De genio Socratis*).[10] In this treatise, Plutarch attempts to define the nature of Socrates' *daimōn*, this little voice that told him what to do or not to do.[11] To find out, what could be better than asking an oracle? At the *manteion* of Trophonios, the Greeks thought that the soul could leave the body and receive the oracular answer in the world beyond, while in direct contact with the god.[12] In a scene worthy of Dante, Trophonios explains to Timarchos, with the support of images, how the souls that death frees from the body try to escape the cycle of reincarnation. So the Styx, which in the Middle-Platonic view of the Netherworld is the way from the earth to the moon, touches the moon twice every year. The souls which are carried up by the river are terrified:

> As the Styx draws near [the moon], the souls cry out in terror, for many slip off and are carried away by Hades; others, whose cessation of birth falls out at the proper moment, swim up from below and are rescued by the moon, the fool and unclean excepted. These the moon, with lightning and a terrible roar, forbids to approach, and bewailing their own lot they fall away […].[13]

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9 Anyway, later texts are not necessarily mistaken. Cakes from the Trophonion, it is true, are nowhere else named "ox." But lexicographers speak about some other cakes, *melitoutta*, used at Lebadeia, and these cakes were already cited by Aristophanes (*Clouds* 505–9), Lucian (*Dialogues of the Dead* 10), Maximos of Tyre (*Dissertations* 12.2) and Philostratos (*Life of Apollonios* 8.19).

10 Plutarch could hardly be the source of the lexicographers, because he never speaks of any βοῦς cake in his preserved works. However, cakes shaped like an ox are well known in cult, and attested through epigraphical evidence: *LSCG* 25ab, ll. 1–2 (Athens, 4th–3rd century BCE: Apollo Pythios) and 52 (Athens, cultic calendar, 1st century CE: Kronos); Hesychios, s.v. βοῦς; βοῦς ἕβδομος; ἕβδομος βοῦς; Photios, s.v. βοῦς ἕβδομος; Σελήνη; Poll. 6.76 (who cites together βοῦς and the μελιτοῦττα of Lebadeia, and specifies the divinities who could be given this kind of cake: Apollo, Artemis, Hekate and Selene). In any case, the lexicographers gloss the word in relation with the moon (see also Eustathios of Thessalonike, *Commentary on the Iliad* 18.513). Sophocles (fr. 731 Radt) associates the μάγιδες to Hekate, while this kind of cake, according to the lexicographers, was also used at the Trophonion.

11 In the Middle Platonism, the *daimōn* of Socrates appears to be both apotreptic and protreptic.

12 For all this, see Bonnechere 2003, 129–217 and *passim*.

13 Plutarch, *De genio Socratis* 591c: "καὶ τῆς Στυγὸς ἐπιφερομένης αἱ ψυχαὶ **βοῶσι** δειμαίνουσαι· πολλὰς γὰρ ὁ Ἅιδης ἀφαρπάζει περιολισθανούσας, ἄλλας δ' ἀνακομίζεται κάτωθεν ἡ σελήνη προςνηχομένας, αἷς εἰς καιρὸν ἡ τῆς γενέσεως τελευτὴ συνέπεσε, πλὴν ὅσαι μιαραὶ καὶ ἀκάθαρτοι· ταύτας δ' **ἀστράπτουσα** καὶ **μυκωμένη** φοβερὸν οὐκ ἐᾷ πελάζειν, ἀλλὰ θρηνοῦσαι τὸν ἑαυτῶν πότμον ἀποσφαλλόμεναι ...." Ed. and trans. (slightly revised) De Lacy and Einarson. The passage is confirmed, but without any mention of bellowing, in *De facie* 943d.

The idea that a bellowing scares impure souls is not Plutarch's own. In Plato's *Republic* (615e–616a) (and nothing proves that he invented this tradition), such a bellowing terrifies the souls that are coming back from the Netherworld where they were punished for their misdeeds, and they then prepare for a new incarnation.[14] From these examples, it is clear that the verb μυκάομαι (like βρυχάομαι)[15] reveals a very strong experience. One might say that the *katabasis* presented here is ouranian, and that it is not a physical *katabasis*, but rather a *katabasis* of the soul. However, whether the Netherworld is under the earth or in the sky,[16] this variation does not change the sheer idea of going there. In fact, the *katabasis* of the soul is by far the best-documented kind. As soon as *metempsychōsis* comes into play, the soul appears in front of the gods to be judged and, most of the time, is sent back to earth, i.e. the Netherworld. That is precisely what the deceased who is equipped with an 'Orphic' funerary lamella is trying to avoid.[17]

Anyway, going down under the ground and going up to the sky are altogether at play with bellowing in Aristophanes' *Clouds*. The story is well known: Strepsiades decides to use the mysteries of the Clouds to liquidate his

14 Plato, *Republic* 615de: οὓς οἰομένους ἤδη ἀναβήσεσθαι οὐκ ἐδέχετο τὸ στόμιον, ἀλλ' **ἐμυκᾶτο** ὁπότε τις τῶν οὕτως ἀνιάτως ἐχόντων εἰς πονηρίαν ἢ μὴ ἱκανῶς δεδωκὼς δίκην ἐπιχειροῖ ἀνιέναι. ἐνταῦθα δὴ ἄνδρες, ἔφη, ἄγριοι, διάπυροι ἰδεῖν, παρεστῶτες καὶ καταμανθάνοντες τὸ **φθέγμα**, τοὺς μὲν διαλαβόντες ἦγον … ("And when these [tyrants and other murderers] supposed that at last they were about to go up and out [from Hell], the mouth [i.e. the door] would not receive them, but it bellowed when anyone of the incurably wicked or of those who had not completed their punishment tried to come up. And thereupon" he said, "savage men of fiery aspect who stood by and took note of the voice/bellowing laid hold on them and bore them away"). See also 616a: ἔνθα δὴ φόβων, ἔφη, πολλῶν καὶ παντοδαπῶν σφίσι γεγονότων, τοῦτον ὑπερβάλλειν, μὴ γένοιτο ἑκάστῳ τὸ **φθέγμα** ὅτε ἀναβαίνοι, καὶ ἁσμενέστα τα ἕκαστον σιγήσαντος ἀναβῆναι ("And then, though many and manifold dread things had befallen them, this fear exceeded all, lest each one should hear the voice/bellowing when he tried to go up, and each went up most gladly when it had kept silence"). Trans. (slightly revised) Shorey. Aristotle (*Posterior Analytics.* 2.11.94b32–34) sends back evasively to Pythagorian beliefs, and we know that, according to these, the souls of good demons dwelled on the moon.

15 See Pietrobelli 2012.

16 In this conception, subterranean Hell becomes less important, but it nevertheless lingers in the minds: Tartaros, the high-security prison, for example, keeps its underground location. On the other hand, as soon as the soul aspires to go back to the sun, its move is therefore directed towards the heaven. Cosmologies were consequently adapted: see now Mihai 2015. A *katabasis* does not always imply the idea of "going down," despite of the prefix *kata*; see further below.

17 See Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008; Graf and Johnston 2013; Edmonds 2013.

son's debts. He goes to the Thinkery of Socrates, who is the mystagogue of the Clouds, in order to be initiated into the knowledge of language, which in turn will allow him to swindle his creditors. The Clouds make themselves heard across the whole sky (ll. 356–57). Their voice is shot through with thunder, a "bellowing" voice, according to Socrates himself. This voice/bellowing (φθέγμα) terrifies Strepsiades,[18] who immediately feels his soul take flight upwards.[19] At the moment when he is about to *katabainein* into the chamber for further revelation, he begs Socrates: "Give me a honey cake first; I'm as scared to go in there as into the cave of Trophonios!," i.e. the very place of the vision of Timarchos in Plutarch's story.[20]

Let us now jump ahead in time to reach Egypt and its magical papyri, in a formula meant to make Helios appear:

> And at once make a long bellowing sound, straining your belly, that you may excite your five senses; bellow long until out of breath, and again kiss the phylacteries; and say: '*Mokrimo pherimo phereri*, life of me, NN: stay! Dwell in my soul. Do not abandon me, for *entho phenen thripiōth* commands you.' And gaze upon the god while bellowing long; and greet him in this manner […].[21]

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18 Aristophanes, *Clouds* 294: οὕτως αὐτὰς τετρεμαίνω καὶ πεφόβημαι ("so much do I tremble at them and I am terrified"); 374: τοῦτό με ποιεῖ τετρεμαίνειν ("This makes me quiver").

19 Aristophanes, *Clouds* 292: ᾔσθου φωνῆς ἅμα καὶ βροντῆς **μυκησαμένης** θεοσέπτου; ("Do you hear their august voice and thunder, bellowing?") 319: ταῦτ' ἄρ' ἀκούσασ' αὐτῶν τὸ **φθέγμ'** ἡ ψυχή μου πεπότηται ("So that is why my soul, having heard their voice/bellowing, flew away).")

20 Aristophanes, *Clouds* 506–8: δός μοι μελιτοῦτταν πρότερον, ὡς δέδοικ' ἐγὼ εἴσω καταβαίνων ὥσπερ εἰς Τροφωνίου.

21 *PGM* iv.705–14 (ed. Preisendanz et al. 1974^2; trans. Betz et al. 1992^2): σὺ δὲ εὐθέως | **μύκωμα** μακρόν, βασανίζων τὴν γαστέρα, | ἵνα συνκινήσῃς τὰς πέντε αἰσθήσεις, μα/κρὸν εἰς ἀπόθεσιν, **μυκῶ** καταφιλῶν πάλιν / τὰ φυλακτήρια καὶ λέγων· /'μοκριμο φεριμο/φερερι ζω<ή> μου, τοῦ δεῖνα, μένε σύ, νέμε ἐν τῇ / ψυχῇ μου, μή με / καταλείψῃς, ὅτι κελεύει σοι /ενθο φενεν θροπιωθ.' καὶ ἀτένιζε τῷ θεῷ / μακρὸν **μυκώμενος** καὶ ἀσπάζου οὕτως… Identical passage in *PGM* iv.656–61. The text adds a clear relationship between thunder, thunderlight, seism, and whirl (iv.680–86): χαίρετε, οἱ κνωδακοφύλακες, οἱ ἱεροὶ καὶ ἄλκιμοι νεανίαι, οἱ στρέφοντες ὑπὸ ἓν κέλευσμα τὸν περιδίνητον τοῦ κύκλου ἄξονα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ βροντὰς καὶ ἀστραπὰς καὶ σεισμῶν καὶ κεραυνῶν βολὰς ἀφιέντες εἰς δυσσεβῶν φῦλα ("Hail, O guardians of the pivot, O sacred and brave youths, who turn at one command the revolving axis of the vault of heaven, who send out thunder and lightning and jolts of earthquakes and thunderbolts against the nations of impious people…").

It is a face to face contact with the god which comes after a long ritual preparation, and which can be identified with a *katabasis*. This is not a unicum: in another papyrus we read:

> (Breathe out, in. Fill up:) 'EI AI OAI' (pushing more, bellow-howling). 'Come to me, god of gods, AEOEI EI IAO AE OIOTK' (Pull in, fill up, shutting your eyes. Bellow as much as you can, then sighing, give out [what air remains] in a hiss).[22]

In both cases, we note the importance of respiration. The magician exhales as much as possible in order for the god to enter his soul. Thus divine possession happens between two bellowings.

The oracle of Trophonios, the initiation into the mysteries of the Clouds, and the summoning of a god in theurgic ritual all have this in common that they allow the activation of the soul in a *katabatic* style revelation. The scheme linking bellowing and the sacred is already fixed by Homer, in an obvious way: when Odysseus' companions arrive at Kirke's house, they hear an extraordinary song. Is it a woman or a goddess? The text adds: δάπεδον δ' ἅπαν **ἀμφιμέμυκεν** (227) – "the earth bellowed all over." And when Odysseus comes back from Kirke's house, after the divine manifestation, his companions cry around him in the manner of bellowing calves.[23]

Katabasis and the Terrible Noise during Contacts between Worlds

Bellowing during *katabasis* is only one part of the atrocious cacophony that accompanies, in the Greek imagination, the terrifying opening of the supposedly impervious boundary between our world and the world beyond. We

22 *PGM* xiii.943–47: πνεῦσον ἔξω, ἔσω. διαπλήρωσον· 'ει·αι·l οαι·' ἔσω προσβαλόμενος **μύκησαι**. (ὀλοlλυγμός). 'δεῦρό μοι, θεῶν θεέ, αηωηιl ηι Ἰάω αε οιωτκ'. ἕλκυσαι ἔσω, πληροῦl καμμύων, **μύκησαι**, ὅσον δύνασαι, ἔπειτα σlτενάξας **συριγμῷ** ἀνταπόδος. For the important motif of the hissing, see further below.

23 Homer, *Odyssey* 10.227 (with Eustathios' commentary *ad loc.*) and 10.410–14: ὡς δ' ὅτε ἄγραυλοι πόριες περὶ βοῦς ἀγελαίας, ἐλθούσας ἐς κόπρον, ἐπὴν βοτάνης κορέσωνται, πᾶσαι ἅμα σκαίρουσιν ἐναντίαι· οὐδ' ἔτι σηκοὶ ἴσχουσ', ἀλλ' ἁδινὸν **μυκώμεναι ἀμφιθέουσι** μητέρας· ὣς ἐμὲ κεῖνοι, ἐπεὶ ἴδον ὀφθαλμοῖσι, δακρυόεντες ἔχυντο… ("And as when calves in a farmstead sport about the droves of cows returning to the yard, when they have had their fill of grazing – all together they frisk before them, and the pens no longer hold them, but with constant bellowing they run all around their mothers"). Trans. (slightly revised) Murray.

already noted lightning, thunder and fear. Let us be more precise. The *Nekyia* in the *Odyssey* relies more on atmosphere than on sounds.[24] Odysseus, blindly pushed around by Boreas, crosses the "deep-eddying" Okeanos (ἐπ᾽ Ὠκεανῷ βαθυδίνῃ). Then, in the fully dark and misty land of the Kimmerians, he reaches the place where the convergence of the infernal rivers makes a "crashing noise" (ἐρίδουπος), later ῥόχθος, "roaring,"[25] according to Lykophron.

By contrast, there is a very colorful image of noise in Sophocles' last play, *Oedipus at Colonus*, which associates Oedipus and Theseus in a two-level *katabasis*, which proves fatal for the former, and takes place in front of the "threshold of the Netherworld," in the *alsos* of Colonus. Oedipus senses his imminent disapperance in a storm of wind, rain and hail. The chorus emphasizes the "spheric circularity" of the storm (ll. 1478–79): "Once again the piercing and loud din is around us!" (ἰδοὺ μάλ' αὖθις **ἀμφίσταται** διαπρύσιος **ὄτοβος**),[26] earth and sky shaken[27] in a terrifying manner. In line 1606 (**κτύπησε** μὲν Ζεὺς χθόνιος), the use of κτυπέω, "to ring/resound," illustrates again the circularity of the noise, how all-encompassing the sound is even reaching underground. In line 1464 already, the word κτύπος was used in a similar way: "Listen! This louder noise crashes down unutterable, hurled by Zeus! A great fear creeps deep into my curls" ("Ιδε μάλα μέγας ἐρείπεται / κτύπος ἄφατος ὅδε διόβολος· ἐς δ' ἄκραν / δεῖμ' ὑπῆλθε κρατὸς φόβαν). In the *The Women of Trachis*, Herakles, brought down by the poisonous tunic, becomes mad: "For he convulsed down to the ground and up into the air as he shouted and **cried out**. All around the cliffs **resounded**, both the steep headlands of Lokris and the Euboean capes."[28] The chorus of the *Oedipus at Colonus* details two revealing topoi concerning

24 Homer, *Odyssey* 10.505–15 and 11.11–22. Odysseus' *katabasis*, following the instructions of Kirke, is not a trip going down underground, because Odysseus basically remains on the same horizontal level, using a *bothros* as a trap-door to the Underworld (see also Ekroth, this volume). Such a *bothros* exists in the cult of Trophonios as well (Pausanias 9.39.6), but at Lebadeia the underground travel is definitely clear.

25 Lykophron, *Alexandra* 695–96. In Hesiod's *Work and Days* (504–11), Boreas provokes the bellowing of the earth and the woods, and the same Boreas here blindly leads Odysseus' boat on Ὠκεανῷ βαθυδίνῃ.

26 See also Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus* 1500–4; 1508–17. On ὄτοβος, see below n. 32.

27 Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus* 94–95 and 1606.

28 Sophocles, *Women of Trachis* 786–88: ἐσπᾶτο γὰρ πέδονδε καὶ μετάρσιος, | βοῶν, ἰύζων: ἀμφὶ δ᾽ ἐκτύπουν πέτραι, | Λοκρῶν τ᾽ ὄρειοι πρῶνες Εὐβοίας τ᾽ἄκραι. Trans. Jebb. See the use of κτυπέω in Euripides' *Cyclops* (328), referring to Zeus' thunder (Διὸς βρονταῖσιν εἰς ἔριν κτυπῶν), and Kallimachos, *Hymns* 3.46–65 (in the Cyclops' forge, again alluding to the resounding of mountains, in a passage full of reminiscences and deep and dreadful noise).

the way to Hades, on which, it is explicitly said, Hermes now travels with Oedipus: the Styx (roaring, even if it is implicit) and Kerberos howling in front of the gates.[29] Just for giggles, when Theseus is called to Oedipus' help, he is called a βουθύτης, "sacrificer of a βοῦς" (1495): so bellowing is not far away.[30]

Of course we remember the Cattle of the Sun (*Odyssey* 12.395–96): Odysseus' people butchered the meat of the sacrificial victims, but nonetheless the 'Cattle' kept bellowing all around while roasting on spits, with terrible consequences (κρέα δ' ἀμφ' ὀβελοῖσι μεμύκει).

Aristophanes' Clouds, which materialize on stage, are bellowing (ll. 263–456). They also live in the ether and carry lightning and thunder (l. 265). Who are they ruled by? By the Big Vortex, the ethereal *Dinos* who has now replaced Zeus and the other gods. The Clouds themselves make up the (always whirling) chorus. They claim to have left their father Okeanos, βαρυαχέος (277) "resounding" – so they say – and they evoke the "roaring" rivers (κελαδήματα) and the sea with its loud rumbling (κελάδοντα βαρύβρομον) (ll. 280–83). They are described by Strepsiades in a parody of tragic verse (ll. 335–38): they move in "a tumultuous onrush" (δάϊον ὁρμάν), they are "whirling with lightning" (στρεπταίγλαν), and "a hurricane that unleashes the winds" (πρημαινούσας τε θυέλλας). And they still praise Athens for two things: the Eleusinian Mysteries (which hallow a contact with the world beyond), and the Great Dionysia, with their exhilarating choruses and their grave rumbling of *auloi*, which are, like rivers in the same passage, also called βαρύβρομοι (ll. 299–313): the same words are then used to describe the elements and the music which illustrate the contact between the worlds. This explains quite well why Dionysos, the god of wine, music and trance, arrives by the sea, and why entrances to the Netherworld are often caves in front of the sea.[31] The Greek vocabulary of noise confirms the narrow link between vortex, wind, water and the sound of musical instruments, a path that I am now exploring in greater detail.[32]

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29 Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus* 1556–77 and 1645–52. Theseus covers his eyes so as not to witness a terrifying omen.

30 The victim which bellows during its own sacrifice is a theme that would be interesting to look at too.

31 On the relation between cattle and loud-roaring sea, for ex. *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 340–41. For entrances to the Underworld, see also the contribution by Friese in this volume.

32 The LSJ defines κελαδήμα (and also κελαδέω) as a rushing sound: of winds (Euripides, *Phoenician Women* 213), rivers (Aristophanes, *Clouds* 283), and later, of any loud sound (for ex. of trumpets: *Anthologia Palatina* 6.350 [Krinagoras]); βαρύβρομος means loud-roaring, esp. of the sea, the waves, the thunder, rugged banks or coasts, also loud-sounding, esp. of αὐλός, τύμπανα, and even harmonies. *Idem* for ὄτ(τ)οβος: any loud noise: din of battle,

According to *On the Genius of Socrates*, as soon as Timarchos reaches Trophonios' abode as a soul, he contemplates the souls of good demons in the ether, who are, again, whirling with sweet-sounding constancy.[33] Then he ventures to look down and contemplates the chasm of the real world, i.e. the Netherworld itself:[34]

> most terrible and deep was [the abyss], and filled with a mass of darkness that did not remain at rest, but was agitated and often welled up, as if they were stirred by waves. From it could be heard innumerable howls (ὠρυγή) and groans of animals (στεναγμός), the wailing of innumerable babes (κλαυθμός), the mingled lamentations of men and women (ὀδυρμός), and noise (ψόφος) and uproar of every kind (θορύβος), coming faintly from far down in the depths, all of which startled him not a little.[35]

So we must definitely, to the noise, the light and the darkness, add the whirl.

Bellowing in Non-Katabatic Contexts

The best example of this apocalyptic contact with whirling and howling appears in the Hesiodic Gigantomachy, or in the Homeric episode of the Skamander trying to destroy Achilles, in which everything I have just discussed seems concentrated: storms, whirlpools, bellowing, screams, blazing fire, roaring water,

rattling of chariots; crash of thunder; musical sounds of the *aulos* and clappers (κροτάλον). The very interesting study of Bing (1981) should then be revisited in taking care of those new aspects.

33 Plutarch, *De genio Socratis* 22.590f–591a: ἔπειτα κατακούειν ἀμαυρῶς ῥοίζου τινὸς ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς περιελαυνομένου φωνὴν ἡδεῖαν ἱέντος.

34 In the Netherworld, terrible (whirls and the like) and agreeable (harmony of the spheres, and the like) noises are always to be found together. In opposition to the tumultuous noise related above (n.), Vergil speaks about green meadows and lyre music for wise souls (*Aeneid* 6.637–59). If the Ocean is whirling, he is never noisy, but rather ἀκαλαρρείτης in Homer (*Iliad* 7.422; *Odyssey* 19.434), in contrast to πολύφλοισβος θάλασσα. Cf. Strabo 1.1.7.

35 Plutarch, *De genio Socratis* 22.590c–d: φοβερὸν δὲ δεινῶς καὶ βαθύ, πολλοῦ σκότους πλῆρες οὐχ ἡσυχάζοντος ἀλλ' ἐκταραττομένου καὶ ἀνακλύζοντος πολλάκις· ὅθεν ἀκούεσθαι μυρίας μὲν **ὠρυγὰς καὶ στεναγμοὺς** ζῴων μυρίων δὲ **κλαυθμὸν** βρεφῶν καὶ μεμιγμένους ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικῶν **ὀδυρμούς**, **ψόφους** δὲ παντοδαποὺς καὶ **θορύβους** ἐκ βάθους πόρρωθεν ἀμυδροὺς ἀναπεμπομένους οἷς οὐ μετρίως αὐτὸς ἐκπεπλῆχθαι. Trans. (slightly revised) De Lacy-Einarson.

terror, death but also life.[36] However, to study bellowing apart from the context of *katabasis stricto sensu*, let us ask Euripides, who is always eloquent when it comes to innovating on the basis of old themes, in the *Bacchae* or *Iphigeneia in Tauris*. Keep in mind that, in the three examples cited at the beginning, bellowing was to some extant connected to the "activation of the soul."

First of all the *Bacchae* is among the "noisiest" plays preserved: the chorus whirls, tambourines clatter all around Pentheus' house, snakes hiss, the palace collapses in a huge crash during an earthquake (which includes lightning),[37] a terrifying voice comes out of nowhere (like in the finale of *Oedipus at Colonus* or in Plutarch's episode of Timarchos); all of Kithairon, including its beasts, participates in the Bacchanal (συμβακχεύειν); Agave, who is possessed by Dionysos (1124: ἐκ Βακχίου κατείχετο), shouts to the Bacchants who are called "she-hounds," and when Dionysos commands them to punish Pentheus, "a divine fire shoots forth, connecting the sky with the earth," which is followed by complete silence.[38] On vases from the mid-sixth century to 400 BCE, the Maenads are represented whirling about, and two even have significant names: Dina and Helike, i.e. personifications of the vortex.[39] Valérie Toillon demonstrated how much the movements of the body, on some ancient vase-paintings, are a direct translation of inner emotions, so that a whirling maenad also reveals her whirling soul.[40] Now that the framework of the *Bacchae* has been exposed, let us turn to bellowing: a cowherd, who later reports to Pentheus, finds the Bacchae as the sun rises, the famous moment of transition:

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36 Hesiod, *Theogony* 677–712 and 839–58. Homer, *Iliad* 21 *passim*, esp. 234–39. Mackie 1999 is on the right track, but missed the importance of the whirling aspect.

37 See Euripides, *Bacchae* 585, on "Earthquake," *Einosis*, the personification of the seism. Also Hesiod, *Theogony* 681.

38 Euripides, *Bacchae* 555–61 (tambourines); 64–169 (music around the palace); 99–103 (snakes); 578 (anonymous voice); 585–609, 623 and 633 (earthquake with lightning, noise, collapse of the palace: see also Aeschylus' fr. 58 [*Edonians*]); 725–27 (συμβακχεύειν); 731 (Agave's shouts to "she-dogs of Lyssa;" also 977–78: the "she-dogs" have to goad Agave); 734–74 (the Bacchae swoop down on bellowing cows); 989–91 (Pentheus is from the blood of a lioness [roary beast], or of Libyan Gorgons [crying and hissing monsters], see also 1155: "Son of the serpent," a premonition of his death, when he will roar/hiss); 1081–84 (Dionysos' shout and light, followed by silence), etc.

39 Helike: Stamnos attributed to the Midas Painter (470–450 BCE), New Haven, Yale University 1913.32 (*LIMC* IV, s.v. Helike I). On the other side, a maenad with nebris(?) and torchlights. Dina: Bell-krater attributed to the Dinos Painter (450–430 BCE), Basle, H. Cahn HC 1623; Kossatz-Deissman 1991, 143, fig. 7.

40 Toillon 2014.

> All were asleep, their bodies relaxed, some with their backs against pine foliage, others laying their heads at random on the oak leaves [...]. Your mother raised the ***ololugē***, standing up in the midst of the Bacchae, to wake their bodies from sleep, when she heard the bellowing of the horned cattle.[41]

The Bacchae lost consciousness during their nocturnal dances, and that is why Euripides specifies that their bodies are loosened up, sprawling with no decorum whatsoever,[42] at the very spot where the Dionysiac trance overcame them, at the moment when their souls, leaving the body – completely apathetic – come into contact with the god.[43] Thus, the oxen's bellowing is anything but a quaint detail: it coincides with the 'return of the soul' into the body, which has remained in the exact same position it assumed when the soul left it.[44] And it is surely no coincidence that the Bacchae's frenzy was initiated when they were attacked by the cattlemen accompanied by their bellowing herds (ll. 734–74). We know that the orgiastic *thiasos* was also traditionally associated with storms, thunder, and lightning through its musical instruments, like *tympana* and *rhomboi* ("bull roarers"), and through dance. Aeschylus' fr. 57 from the *Edonians* – a purely Dionysiac play – illustrates the role of music in orgiastic rites: "And the twang of the string sounds loudly; and terrible imitators with the voice of a bull answer in bellowing from somewhere out of sight, and the fearful sound of the drum carries to the ear like 'thunder' deep into the earth"

41 Euripides, *Bacchae* 683–91: ηὗδον δὲ πᾶσαι σώμασιν παρειμέναι, | αἱ μὲν πρὸς ἐλάτης νῶτ' ἐρείσασαι φόβην, | αἱ δ' ἐν δρυὸς φύλλοισι πρὸς πέδωι κάρα | εἰκῆι βαλοῦσαι σωφρόνως, οὐχ ὡς σὺ φῂις | ὠινωμένας κρατῆρι καὶ λωτοῦ ψόφωι | θηρᾶν καθ' ὕλην Κύπριν ἠρημωμένας. | ἡ σὴ δὲ μήτηρ **ὠλόλυξεν** ἐν μέσαις | σταθεῖσα βάκχαις ἐξ ὕπνου κινεῖν δέμας, | **μυκήμαθ'** ὡς ἤκουσε κεροφόρων βοῶν.

42 The precision about the foliage does not refer to makeshift beds (for ex. Grégoire 1968, 269, n. 2, or Seaford, 1997 *ad* 684–85) but rather to a coincidence when they fell unconscious. This does not mean that coincidence in Euripides is always happy coincidence: the pine will be the cause of Pentheus' atrocious death, and the oak recalls Dryas' sad stories in the Dionysiac sphere.

43 We must read this passage in relation with *Bacchae* 443–46: The Bacchae who were ἐν δεσμοῖσι, "bound in chains," by Pentheus were freed by Dionysos. In many philosophical works, the soul is tied to the body by δεσμοί, and tries to escape during the night or during a face to face contact with divinities, and of course at the time of death.

44 A nice parallel has to be drawn with Timarchos' consultation of Trophonios: when his soul, who has heard the bellowing of the moon, comes back into his body, suddenly the young man is coming to, and realizes that he lies exactly where he fainted (οὗπερ ἐξ ἀρχῆς κατεκλίθη). Intertextuality looks deeper than expected.

i.e. the noise of an earthquake:[45] the epiphany of Dionysos, who is himself a "horned bull" in the *Bacchae* (ll. 921–22), although he never explicitly bellows, corresponds with the general clatter and bellowing that is part of the scene.[46]

Orestes' madness, as he is chased by the Erinyes in *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, confirms the connection between possession and bellowing. Orestes has been sent to Tauris by Apollo to recover the statue of Artemis. In a passage that is corrupted, but in a way that does not affect us, a cowherd describes Orestes' behavior to King Thoas, when he has visions of the Erinyes or, in other words, when he is ἔκφρων[47]: "Yet to our vision there were no such figures but he †alternated/confused/was getting in return/was answered by† the bellowing of oxen and the barking of dogs [whose sounds, so he swore, the Furies were imitating]."[48] With the Furies, we return to the vocabulary of animal noise already

45 Aeschylus, fr. 57: […] ψαλμὸς δ' **ἀλαλάζει·** | **ταυρόφθογγοι** δ' **ὑπομυκῶνται** | ποθὲν ἐξ ἀφανοῦς' φοβεροὶ μῖμοι, | ἠχὼ τυπάνου δ', ὥσθ' ὑπογαίου | βροντῆς φέρεται βαρυταρβής (Radt). Trans. (slightly revised) Sommerstein. The link between thunder and earth is given by Hesiod (*Theogony* 505). For the details about Dionysism and mystery cults: Seaford 1997, 195–98. But all these characteristics of "Dionysiac" epiphanies – by far the best described – are now seen to be debated in a much larger context: seisms, winds, lightnings, whirls, howling, music, rushing/loud-roaring/loud-sounding music or noise, etc., arise as soon as the boundary of worlds is opened, since the Archaic period. Some passages are revealing: Pind. *Dith.* fr. 70b Maehler (ῥόμβοι τυπάνων, "whirlings of drums"); Sophocles, *Antigone* 153–54 (ἐλελίχθων Βάκχιος). See also Euripides, *Helen* 1301–68, which powerfully evokes the mysteries of the Great Mother (e.g. 1362–63: ῥόμβου θ' εἱλισσομένα/ κύκλιος ἔνοσις αἰθερία, "the circular whirling ethereal earthquake of the rhombos"). See Kannicht 1969 *ad loc.* (fundamental) and West 1983, 155–57 and 170–72.

46 Any mythic or 'cultic' apparition of Dionysos as a bull/ox/calf thus gains a new interpretative level if we pay attention to the power of bellowing, see for example Plutarch, *Greek Questions* 36 (ἄξιε ταῦρε, "noble bull").

47 A tradition according to which every god had his own way to take possession of the human mind goes back as far as the 5th century BCE, and probably much earlier. *The Sacred Disease* (1.11) refers to practionniers of the sacred about the epileptic seizure: if the patient imitates a goat, roars (βρυχάομαι) and suffers spasms on the right side, he is attacked by the Mother of the Gods; if he "winnows" like a horse, it is Poseidon; if he foams at the mouth, it is Ares. Hekate, who is responsible for terrors at night and jumping from the bed, is the leader a noisy infernal *thiasos* close to the Erinyes and well attested from the Classical period. See Jouanna 2003, 56–61.

48 Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Tauris* 291–94: παρῆν δ' ὁρᾶν | οὐ ταῦτα μορφῆς σχήματ', ἀλλ' †ἠλλάσσετο† | **φθογγάς** τε **μόσχων** καὶ **κυνῶν ὑλάγματα**, | [ἃς φᾶσ' Ἐρινῦς ἱέναι μιμήματα]. Especially at the beginning, the verse 294 proves badly corrupt (and athetized by Wilamowitz): see Cropp 2000. Some editors even corrected μιμήματα in μυκήματα, a fine reading, for sure, in accordance with the ancient *realia*, but probably a step too far.

noted from the *Bacchae*, the howling of dogs and the hissing of snakes. To the Greek mind, those features were simply obvious.[49]

I am going to leave out the Erinyes in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* and *Eumenides*[50] because Euripides' *Herakles* deserves thorough attention (ll. 858–920): there, Herakles is assaulted by Lyssa, the personification of rage. She is identified with the Gorgon and her snakes with their hundred hissing heads.[51] She leads fierce dogs, sets the mind in a frenzy, and makes her victims dance to the direful music of an *aulos* (which is βαρύβρομος) in a quick and whirling choral dance. Addressing Athena (ll. 906–9), the chorus says that the chaos Lyssa provoked, both by hurricane (θύελλα) and earthquake, equals the clash during which she herself once threw Enkelados to Tartaros,[52] and in fact would be comparable to the cosmic crash of the *Prometheus Bound*, obviously a non-Dionysiac play.[53] To this bacchanal "Dionysos is not invited" (ll. 891–92). Lyssa boasts about being as efficient as the roaring waves of the sea, as the earthquake, or the

49 In the *Aeneid* (607), the Erinyes have a "thundering" voice.

50 Orestes suddenly sees the black Erinyes, intertwined with innumerable (hissing) snakes, and calls them his "mother's (barking) dogs." At the beginning of the *Eumenides* (116–30), the Erinyes are presented like Gorgons, out of Tartaros and with a fiery breath (137). In their sleep, they moan, then cry (μυγμόι, μύζω; ὠγμός, ὤζω). While Orestes acts as a suppliant in front of the Athenian statue of Athena, they begin to whirl around him, singing a hymn "over the sacrificial victim – frenzied, maddened, destroying the mind […], a spell to bind the soul, not tuned to the lyre, withering the life of mortals" (trans. Smyth). Any criminal is then doomed to be sent into the Netherworld through an irresistible (and noisy) whirl (558–65: <ἐν> μέσᾳ δυσπαλεῖ τε δίνᾳ).

51 Euripides, *Herakles* 880–84. Gorgons themselves are bellowing in Ps.-Plutarch, *On Rivers* 18.6: "Mycenae was formerly called Argion […] but afterwards the name was changed upon this occasion. When Perseus had slain Medusa, Stheno and Euryale, her sisters, pursued him as a murderer. But coming to this hill and despairing to overtake him, out of that extreme love which they had for their sister they made such a bellowing (**μυκηθμὸν** ἀνέδωκαν), that the natives from thence called the top of the mountain Mycenae (**Μυκήνας** μετωνόμασαν)." Trans. Goodwin.

52 Tartaros comes from ταράσσω: Chantraîne, *DELG*, s.v. The *aulos*' sound (according for ex. to Pindar, *Pythian* 12) is nothing else than the voice of the Gorgons made musical by Athena.

53 In the *Prometheus Bound*, from the 5th century BCE (to avoid debates about date), Hermes tries to persuade Prometheus to reveal his secret about a forthcoming destitution of Zeus. He refuses, and Zeus initiates a cosmic crash, in the vein of the Hesiodic Titanomachy: fire, snow, subterranean thunder, lightning, thunderbolts, howling winds, roaring sea, gigantic whirl, Tartaros. The earth shakes, and the ether is mixed with the sea. There is a risk of being terror-struck by the relentless bellowing of the thunder (μὴ φρένας ὑμῶν ἠλιθιώσῃ βροντῆς **μύκημ'** ἀτέραμνον).

goad of lightning when she strikes Herakles' chest. He rolls his blank eyes, loses control of his breath and invokes through his *bellowing* the Keres of Tartaros, which is perhaps the noisiest place in the Netherworld, where also abide the Erinyes, whose whip Lyssa has borrowed.[54] In other words, he bellows when he becomes ἔκφρων, and Euripides makes use of the topos in all its components.[55] Herakles falls asleep when Athena throws a stone at his chest. When he awakes, he suddenly feels ἔμπνους, when Lyssa's burning breath leaves room for his own soul.[56] Herakles who bellows under possession recalls Agave who is possessed by Dionysos and who, according to Theokritos (26.20), when she seizes Pentheus to tear him apart, bellows as if she were making the μύκημα of a lioness. Note that, in the *Bacchae*, Pentheus' head was first mistaken for a lion's head, then for a bull's head, two roaring/bellowing beasts.[57]

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54 In a wonderful passage about Herakles' madness, Philostratos (*Imagines* 2.23.4) says that his throat is bellowing/roaring (**βρυχᾶται**).

55 Euripides, *Herakles* 834–37 (dance and incitement to kill); 858–71: (Lyssa:) εἰ δὲ δή μ' Ἥραι θ' ὑπουργεῖν σοί τ' ἀναγκαίως ἔχει τάχος ἐπιρροιβδεῖν θ' ὁμαρτεῖν ὡς κυνηγέτηι κύνας, εἶμί γ'· οὔτε πόντος οὕτω κύμασι στένων λάβρος οὔτε γῆς σεισμὸς κεραυνοῦ τ' οἶστρος ὠδῖνας πνέων οἷ' ἐγὼ στάδια δραμοῦμαι στέρνον εἰς Ἡρακλέους· καὶ καταρρήξω μέλαθρα καὶ δόμους ἐπεμβαλῶ, τέκν' ἀποκτείνασα πρῶτον· ὁ δὲ κανὼν οὐκ εἴσεται παῖδας οὓς ἔτικτεν ἐναρών, πρὶν ἂν ἐμὰς λύσσας ἀφῆι. ἢν ἰδού· καὶ δὴ τινάσσει κρᾶτα βαλβίδων ἄπο καὶ διαστρόφους ἑλίσσει σῖγα γοργωποὺς κόρας, ἀμπνοὰς δ' οὐ σωφρονίζει, **ταῦρος ὣς ἐς ἐμβολήν**, δεινὰ **μυκᾶται** δέ Κῆρας ἀνακαλῶν τὰς Ταρτάρου. τάχα σ' ἐγὼ μᾶλλον χορεύσω καὶ καταυλήσω φόβωι, "but if indeed I must at once serve you and Hera and follow you in full cry as hounds follow the huntsman, then I will go; neither ocean with its fiercely groaning waves, nor the earthquake, nor the thunderbolt with blast of agony shall be like the headlong rush I will make into the breast of Herakles; through his roof will I burst my way and swoop upon his house, after first slaying his children; nor shall their murderer know that he is killing the children he begot, till he is released from my madness. Behold him! see how even now he is wildly tossing his head at the outset, and rolling his eyes fiercely from side to side in silence; nor can he control his panting breath, like a fearful bull in act to charge; he bellows, calling on the goddesses of Tartaros. Soon will I rouse you to yet wilder dancing and pipe a note of terror in your ear;" 896–97: the music is dreadful. Trans. Coleridge.

56 The same Herakles in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* roars in his convulsions (805: βρυχώμενον σπασμοῖσι). Deianeira roares in front of the altar just before committing suicide (904: **βρυχᾶτο** μὲν βωμοῖσι). See also 1072: ὥστε παρθένος **βέβρυχα** κλαίων ("[Herakles] howling and crying like a young girl"). In many contexts of potential destruction, enemies are depicted as crying animals, for example Tydeus who hisses like a serpent (Aeschylus, *Seven Against Thebes*. 381), or indeed Ajax bellowing like a bull (Sophocles, *Ajax* 322: ταῦρος ὣς βρυχώμενος).

57 Lion's head: *Bacchae* 1174, 1196, 1279 and 1283). Bull's head (1185; Dodds 1960 *ad* 677–78: "μόσχος] is used in a wider sense than English 'calves' ," with examples).

Back to Magic

Returning to the magical papyri, the only important change to occur in a millennium is that Herakles and Agave bellow when they are possessed, while the magician bellows of his own will to call the god and reach his power. In fact, the magician masters all the noises which one must know in order to call the god. In *PGM* vii.766–79, the companions of a goddess can be called out by fourteen noises, which include: στεναγμός (wailing), συριγμός (hissing), ὀλολυγμός (ritual cry) / μυγμός (moaning), ὑλαγμός (barking), μυκηθμός (bellowing), χρεμετισμ ός (thundering/ winnowing), πνεῦμα φωνᾶεν (a sounding wind/breathing), ἦχος [ἀ]νεμοποιός (a wind-creating sound). All these words or concepts are found, at least once, in the texts cited above, for example in Plutarch's *On the Genius of Socrates*.[58] This catalogue, which also includes silence, σιγή, mentioned in the *Bacchae*, shows how magic in Egypt is not that far from Greek Archaic religion. Indeed, how then could we explain the Hesiodic portrayal of Typhon, son of *Tartaros* and Gaia, in his cosmic struggle with Zeus:

> From his shoulders grew a hundred heads of a snake, a fearful dragon, with dark, flickering tongues, and from under the brows of his eyes in his marvellous heads flashed fire, and fire burned from his heads as he glared. And there were voices in all his dreadful heads which uttered every kind of sound unspeakable; for at one time they made sounds such that the gods understood, but at another, the noise of a bull bellowing [...]; and at another, the sound of a lion [...]; and at another, sounds like puppies [...];[59] and again, at another, he would hiss, so that the high mountains re-echoed. [60]

58 Some noise listed in the papyrus does not appear in the texts we worked on, but a complete search in the TLG could probably surprise us: ποππυσμός, "popping sound," φθόγγος ἐναρμόνιος, "harmonic sound," τελειότητος ἀναγκαστικὴ ἀπόρροια, "coercive emanation from perfection" and φθόγγος ἀναγκαστικός, the "coercive sound" which is typical of theurgic works.

59 A clear reference to another monster, Skylla (Homer, *Odyssey* 12.85–87).

60 Hesiod, *Theogony* 824–35: ἐκ δέ οἱ ὤμων | ἦν ἑκατὸν κεφαλαὶ ὄφιος δεινοῖο δράκοντος, | γλώσσῃσι δνοφερῇσι λελιχμότες· ἐν δέ οἱ ὄσσε | θεσπεσίῃς κεφαλῇσιν ὑπ' ὀφρύσι πῦρ ἀμάρυσσεν· | πασέων δ' ἐκ κεφαλέων πῦρ καίετο δερκομένοιο·] | φωναὶ δ' ἐν πάσῃσιν ἔσαν δεινῇς κεφαλῇσι, | παντοίην ὄπ' ἰεῖσαι ἀθέσφατον· ἄλλοτε μὲν γὰρ | **φθέγγονθ'** ὥς τε θεοῖσι συνιέμεν, ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε | ταύρου **ἐριβρύχεω** μένος ἀσχέτου ὄσσαν ἀγαύρου, | ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε λέοντος ἀναιδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντος, | ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ σκυλάκεσσιν ἐοικότα, θαύματ' ἀκοῦσαι, | ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ **ῥοίζεσχ'**, ὑπὸ δ' ἤχεεν οὔρεα μακρά. Trans. (slightly revised) White 1914. Of all these cries, which he connects with μαίνεσθαι, no one is left out by Plato in a weird passage of the

The echo of the mountains is of course a way to recall whirling and the cosmic shaking of both earth and sky, as in the *Theogony*. The funniest thing about all this is that Aristophanes' Clouds, who bellow in the context of a *katabasis*, exhibit "the hair of hundred-headed Typhon" (πλοκάμους θ' ἑκατογκεφάλα Τυφῶ). According to Socrates, the Clouds can turn into panthers, centaurs, wolves and bulls,[61] a specification which leaves their noise up to the audience's imagination. The variety of noise leaves no doubt to its importance in later Greek thought.[62] A group of Hellenistic epigrams, in particular, takes up the motif: towards the evening, a priest of Cybele who is "savagely inspired" by the goddess (λυσσομανεῖς: his soul is assaulted by Lyssa), takes refuge in an underground cave (*katabatic* motif). A "bull-killing" lion follows him, it rages when it roars (βρυχάομαι) and rolls its eyes, its roar conveyed across the whole cave and valley and up to the Clouds. Then the eunuch shakes his ox-skin tambourine which makes a bellowing music which scares even the most courageous of beasts,[63] and he emits the *ololygē* while – the final touch – whirling his hair about (ἐδίνησεν).[64] In the magical realm, a 'hymn' in the *PGM* depicts Semele-Hekate in direct relation with Typhon's animals:

Republic (396a): in the training of the guardians, any imitation is prohibited. There is a paragraph devoted to the ban of noise: winnowing of the horses, bellowing of the bulls, as well as the noise of the rivers, the sea and the thunder. "They [the guardians] have been forbidden […] to be 'in rage/possessed' or liken themselves to 'raving/possessed people' " (ἀλλ' ἀπείρηται αὐτοῖς […] μήτε μαίνεσθαι μήτε μαινομένοις ἀφομοιοῦσθαι). This text, which has long been tackled in modern commentaries, seems to find some meaning on the background described above.

61 Aristophanes, *Clouds* 346–47: ἤδη ποτ' ἀναβλέψας εἶδες νεφέλην κενταύρῳ ὁμοίαν ἢ παρδάλει ἢ λύκῳ ἢ ταύρῳ; Also 349–50 and 352. A bit later (374–407), Aristophanes' Socrates speaks at length about thunder.

62 For example Plutarch (*De tranquillitate animae* 20.477de), in the frame of the revelation of the mysteries of Nature, makes a distinction between the animals with a nice call, like birds, or those that frolic, and the repulsive beasts that roar/bellow. See also Plutarch, *Parall. Min.* 39 (Phalaris); *Cyranides* (1.21). For evidence, we need only to read Quintus of Smyrna 5. 364–455, or Oppian, *Cynegetica* 4.147–211: when hunting the lion, the Ethiopians use shields made of bull leather, hissing whips, and get the roaring lion (βρυχάομαι) out of its den: the beast has fire-red eyes, throwing thunderbolts similar to Zeus', and its roaring shakes the ether. The Ganges river, with its twenty tributaries, when it throws itself into the sea, does not roar such a terrible βρυχηθμός.

63 With a pun on θαρσαλέος (cf. θαρσῶ, "take heart" in mystery cults).

64 *Anthologia Palatina* 6.217–20: the four epigramms are "tema con variazioni." In 6.222, many themes are repeated and reworked, notably a pun on βουφόρτος "heavily laden," but also evoking the bull.

> Three-headed […], who arm yours hands with dreaded, murky lamps, who shake your locks of fearful serpents on your brow, who sound the roar of the bulls out from your mouths […], with poisonous rows of serpents down the back […], night-crier, bull-faced, loving solitude, bull-headed, you have the eyes of bull, the voice of dogs. You hide your forms in shanks of lions, your ankle is wolf-shaped, fierce dogs are dear to you […].[65]

To end on a larger horizon, two glances at iconography. The Chimera, daughter of Echidna (serpent) and Typhon, at first sight appears rather noisy to Greek ears, in a context of potential world destruction: the lion bellows, the snake hisses, and the goat, which is the most dangerous part of the beast, spitting out devastating fire, roars.[66] Kerberos, also son of Echidna and Typhon, has three dog heads, a mane of snakes, sometimes the hindquarters of a lion and a snake tail. We have also to add the noise of the Netherworld gates, which always bellow on their hinges. Thus, ancient paintings are all but silent. They evoke potentially terrifying sounds that we can no longer hear. When Herakles is implied in the scene, we must add the "silent roar" (μυκηθμός) of the lion (on his back), the *syrigmoi* of the snakes of Athena's aegis. In front of Kerberos, Herakles is shown at the climax of his *katabasis*: everybody knows that the monster, harnessed by the hero and Athena, is not going to unleash all his noisy power, but the suspense about it remains strong.[67] Many other vases, especially those implying a whirling motif, could acquire a more specific meaning, but I will return to this elsewhere.

The *katabasis* to Trophonios' cave is a perfect digest of this paper: there we find fear, bellowing, thunder and lightning. The consultant received two honey cakes in order to appease (hissing) snakes in the cave. Finally when a pilgrim is about to faint in the *adyton*, he feels himself sucked in, "like the mightiest, quickest river catching a man into a whirl and making him disappear" (ὥσπερ

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65 2798–2815: Περσεφόνη τε Μέγαιρα καὶ Ἀλληκτώ,/ πολύμορφε, ἡ χέρας ὁπλίζουσα/ κελαιναῖς λαμπάσι δειναῖς, ἡ φο/βερῶν ὀφίων χαίτην σείουσα μετώ/ποις, ἡ ταύρων **μύκημα** κατὰ στο/μάτων ἀνιεῖσα, ἡ νηδὺν φολί/σιν πεπυκασμένη ἑρπυστήρων,/ ἰοβόλοις ταρσοῖσιν κατωμαδίοισι/ δρακόντων, σφιγγομένη κατὰ/ νῶτα παλαμναίοις ὑπὸ δεσμοῖς,/ νυκτιβόη, ταυρῶπι, φιλήρεμε, ταυ/ροκάρηνε, ὄμμα δέ σοι/ ταυρωπόν, ἔχεις **σκυλακώδεα φω/νήν**, μορφὰς δ' ἐν κνήμαισιν/ ὑποσκεπάουσα λεόντων. μορφό/λυκον σφυρόν ἐστιν,/ κύνες φίλοι/ ἀγριόθυμοι […]. Trans. Betz et al. 1992.

66 Jacquemin 1986, 249–59.

67 Smallwood ap. Boardman 1990, 91–100. See also the contribution by Verbanck-Piérard in this volume.

ποταμῶν ὁ μέγιστος καὶ ὠκύτατος συνδεθέντα ὑπὸ δίνης ἀποκρύψειεν ἂν ἄνθρωπ ον).[68] A *katabasis* is definitely a noisy, swirly and topsy-turvy passage to the Netherworld. In the novel *Leukippe and Kleitophon*, dating to the second century CE, during a storm at noon,

> the fire of lightning flashed from the sky, the heaven bellowed with thunder so that the all air rang with the din; this was answered from below by the turmoil of the waves, and between sky and sea hissed the noise of contending winds. In this manner, the air made a trumpeting sound.[69]

In the *Apocalypse*, the angel, who is swathed in clouds and lightning, bellows like a lion before the seven thunders resound and the sixth trumpet rings.[70] This trumpet still resonates in requiems and surprisingly perpetuates the terrifying sounds that are the result and the sign of a divine epiphany: "The trumpet, scattering a wondrous sound, across the graves of all lands, summons all in front of the Throne" (*Tuba mirum spargens sonum per sepulcra regionum, coget omnes ante thronum*).[71]

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68 Pausanias 9.39.5–14, esp. 11. An oracle, later, could also be uttered in bellowing at Delphi and Dodona: Seneca, *Herakles* 1472–78: "et Parnassio/ Cirrhaea quatiens templa **mugitu** nemus" ("when the bellowing voice shook the sacred grove of the Parnassus and the temple at Kirrha)."

69 Achilles Tatios, *Leukippe and Kleitophon* 3.2.2: πῦρ μὲν ἀστραπῆς ἵπταται, **μυκᾶται** δὲ **βροντῇν** οὐρανὸς καὶ τὸν ἀέρα γεμίζει **βόμβος**, **ἀντεβόμβει** δὲ κάτωθεν τῶν κυμάτων ἡ στάσις, μεταξὺ δὲ οὐρανοῦ καὶ θαλάσσης ἀνέμων ποικίλων **ἐσύριζε** ψόφος. καὶ ὁ μὲν ἀὴρ εἶχε **σάλπιγγος** ἦχον. Trans. (slightly revised) Gaselee. The trumpet motif is not new: the conch shell resounds identically in Theokritos 22.75.

70 *Revelation* 10:1–4: καὶ ἔκραξεν **φωνῇ μεγάλῃ ὥσπερ λέων μυκᾶται.** καὶ ὅτε ἔκραξεν, ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ **βρονταὶ** τὰς ἑαυτῶν **φωνάς.** καὶ ὅτε ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, ἔμελλον γράφειν· καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λέγουσαν, Σφράγισον ἃ ἐλάλησαν αἱ ἑπτὰ βρονταί, καὶ μὴ αὐτὰ γράψῃς. Καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος ὃν εἶδον ἑστῶτα ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἦρεν τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ τὴν δεξιὰν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ ὤμοσεν ἐν τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶναστῶν αἰώνων, ὃς ἔκτισεν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ, ὅτι χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται, ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ ἑβδόμου ἀγγέλου, ὅταν μέλλῃ **σαλπίζειν**, καὶ ἐτελέσθη τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, ὡς εὐηγγέλισεν τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ δούλους τοὺς προφήτας. Trans. SBL online. On the unbearable din of Hell in a Christian context, see also the contribution by Ainalis in this volume.

71 *Dies irae* 3.

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CHAPTER 12

Down There and Back Again

Variations on the Katabasis *Theme in Lucian*

Heinz-Günther Nesselrath

Lucian of Samosata, the versatile rhetorician and witty satirist of the second century CE, devoted a considerable part of his manifold writings to the mythical Greek Underworld. These can be divided into two main groups: in the first one, the main characters are people who have definitely died and are either on their way to or already residing in Hades. Thus, the dialogue *The Downward Journey* (*Cataplus*) shows us a group of newly dead, as they are being led (or transported) by Hermes, Charon, the Moira Klotho and the Erinys Tisiphone to the Underworld court of Minos where they are awarded their future (and permanent) places in the Beyond; in the *Dialogues of the Dead*, this permanent residence is then evoked in thirty (mostly short) scenes, which altogether present a rather Cynic perspective of existence (if it can be called that) after death.[1] In the other group, we meet people who while still living make strictly temporary (and rather short) visits to the Underworld, and it is this kind of "descent" (*katabasis*) that will be my focus in the following pages. Such a *katabasis*, of course, quite necessarily implies also an *anabasis*, a coming-back from the Underworld,[2] for otherwise the performers of *katabasis* would end up no different than the dead in the first group.

By Lucian's time, this *katabasis* already had a respectable literary pedigree: the first prominent καταβάσις was, of course, Odysseus in *Odyssey* 11, the next (in our extant literature) Dionysos in Aristophanes' *Frogs*.[3] In the earlier third century BCE, the Cynic satirist Menippos of Gadara produced a

1 On this, see Nesselrath 2017.

2 Sometimes the notion of *katabasis* is used quite loosely, e.g. in González Serrano 1999, which is just a survey of beliefs and tales (from Neolithic, ancient oriental cultures, the Graeco-Roman world until Dante and the *Apokopos of Bergadhis*) concerning visits to or stays in the Underworld by gods and heroes (including such New Testament figures as Lazarus and Christ himself). Already the title of this paper shows that its terminology is rather vague: at least in the Graeco-Roman world, *katabasis* and 'resurrection' do not go well together, for resurrection can come only after death, and *katabasis* is usually performed by a still living being.

3 Not only in *Frogs*, but also in Aristophanes' comedy *Gerytades* (possibly of 407 BCE) Underworld visitors seem to have consulted dead poets (fr. 156 K.-A.; Helm 1906, 20 and 21–22).

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Nekyia, which very probably also belongs to the literary ancestors of Lucian's *Menippos, or: The Descent Into Hades* (*Nekyomanteia*):[4] a bit more than a century ago, the German classicist Rudolf Helm tried to prove that Menippos' text (of which we know almost nothing except the title)[5] was the main model (and source) of Lucian's (indeed the fact that Lucian's main character in *Menippos, or: The Descent Into Hades* is named Menippos points to a major influence of this work).[6] Lucian, however, is not only a clever user of earlier literature, but also a skilled variator of traditional themes. Thus, within the wide range of his many writings, the *katabasis* theme, too, comes up a number of times, and some of them exhibit rather interesting and ingenious variations.

The 'Classic Treatment': *Menippos, or: The Descent Into Hades*

We get what might be called the 'classic treatment' in *Menippos, or: The Descent Into Hades*: a first-person narrative by the already-mentioned Menippos of his journey to the Underworld and back, set within the frame of a dialogue, in which he tells his fantastic adventure (and his motivation to undertake it) to a friend. At the beginning, the first-person narrator of this piece, Menippos, makes his entrance in quite strange garb: he wears a felt-cap and a lion-skin and carries a lyre. A friend notices this and asks him what this is all about. Menippos at first only answers in quotations (sometimes slightly changed) from Homer and Euripides, claiming that he has just returned from the Underworld. Asked why he has undertaken such a strange journey, he answers (still in Homeric verse) that he (like some latter-day Odysseus) wanted to consult the mythical seer Teiresias. He also mentions that while he was in the Underworld he happened to be present at a political assembly (*ekklesia*) of the dead in which a most severe decree was proposed and adopted against the intolerantly arrogant rich people of this earth (*Nec.* 1–2).

Clearly intrigued by all this, Menippos' friend wants to hear more, not only about what Menippos just told him, but also about his whole Underworld trip. So, Menippos obliges and begins by explaining why he undertook this trip in

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4 At roughly the same time, the sceptical philosopher and satirical poet Timon of Phlius described another satirical *katabasis* in book II of his *Silloi*, in which a first-person narrator seems to have undertaken a journey through the Underworld, on which he may have been accompanied or guided by the philosopher Xenophanes (cf. *Supplementum Hellenisticum* 775 and 833; Helm 1906, 20).

5 Diogenes Laertios 6.101 mentions a *Nekyia* written by Menippos.

6 Helm 1906, 17–62.

the first place, namely because of a moral contradiction that presented itself to him when he grew up: having been brought up on the poetry of Homer and Hesiod, he was at first not very much troubled by their stories about heroes and even gods quarrelling with and cheating and maltreating each other, but when he noticed that this behaviour ran contrary to each and every human law, he became rather worried and hoped that the philosophers might help him sort these questions out. The philosophers, however, threw him into even greater confusion (because they disagreed with each other in the most blatant ways, and, worse still, their own behaviour utterly contradicted their teachings and pronouncements), and so he saw only one way out: to entrust himself to a Babylonian magician to help him find his way into Hades and consult the great Teiresias there (*Nec*. 3–6).

So Menippos goes east, finds a 'Chaldaean' magus with the colourful name Mithrobarzanes and persuades him (with a lot of money) to prepare him for a downward journey into the Underworld. Mithrobarzanes subjects him to elaborate rites for twenty-nine days (with many unintelligible incantations included; *Nec.* 7), and when the decisive day approaches, he dresses Menippos in a number of paraphernalia quite familiar from 'orthodox' Greek myth: a felt cap (a well-known accoutrement from the iconography of Odysseus), a lion-skin (the most famous piece of clothing of Herakles) and a lyre (the typical instrument of Orpheus). So, Menippos is to pose as one (or rather the sum) of these famous Underworld-visitors; apparently, even a Babylonian magician knows no better way to get into the Beyond (and back) than by following in the footsteps of these mythical Greek heroes (*Nec.* 8).

Menippos and his magician then proceed (by boat) deep into a remote swamp (into which the river Euphrates disappears), and there, having dug a sacrificial pit and slaughtered some animals just like Odysseus did in his Homeric *Nekyia*, the magician splits the earth with a loud incantation (*Nec.* 9). Both then descend into the newly opened chasm (through which already more or less all of the Netherworld can be seen: "the Lake and the river Pyriphlegethon and the Place of Plouton") and first meet the mythical Rhadamanthys (apparently acting as gate-keeper) who is almost "dead of fright" because of these unexpected visitors. The hellhound Kerberos is quickly soothed by Menippos posing as Orpheus and striking a few chords on the lyre, and even Charon the ferry-man raises no trouble, because seeing the lion-skin he mistakes Menippos for Herakles (*Nec.* 10). Thus both visitors overcome all the traditional barriers of Hades with surprising ease.

They then arrive on the well-known Meadow of Asphodel, with the screeching souls of the dead flitting all around them (just as at the beginning of the final book of the *Odyssey*), and proceed to the famous Court of the Dead

presided over by Minos (*Nec.* 11). Here they see long columns of wrongdoers and rich people (apparently reckoned here as a separate category of delinquents) approaching. They spend some time watching the proceedings: during these, interestingly, the shadows of human beings act as the accusers of their former possessors, because they were, of course, always present at their actions (*Nec.* 12).[7] Menippos and his Babylonian guide then go on to see the "Place of Punishment" (κολαστήριον), where they witness much wailing and flogging and burning (even Kerberos reappears here – does he not have permanent duty as guard-dog at the gate? *Nec.* 14).

Their next way station is the "Acherusian Plain" (*Nec.* 15), where most of the dead (i.e. those who have to undergo no particular punishment for particular wrongdoing) reside. Here it is most interesting to see how various conceptions of the status and condition of the dead are combined in Menippos' description (with some inherent contradictions that apparently do not much bother Lucian)[8]: On the one hand, the dead seem to be in various stages of decay ("some of them ancient and mouldering, 'strengthless heads,' as Homer has it, others still fresh, with substance yet in them, and most of all the Egyptian ones of them, because of the durability of their embalming"),[9] while on the other they appear as nothing more than bones lying in heaps together ("for all are so like each other when the bones are bared […] They lay there pell-mell in undistinguished heaps […] many skeletons lay in the same spot, and all had eyes glaring ghastly and vacant alike and showed teeth gleaming bare […]"),[10] with the result that Menippos finds it very hard to distinguish one from the other.[11]

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7 Menippos singles out a particular case, in which Minos spares the Syracusan tyrant Dionysios, because the philosopher Aristippus intercedes for him (*Nec.* 13).

8 On these, see Nesselrath 1993.

9 τοὺς μὲν παλαιούς τινας καὶ εὐρωτιῶντας καὶ ὥς φησιν Ὅμηρος, ἀμενηνούς, τοὺς δ' ἔτι νεαλεῖς καὶ συνεστηκότας, καὶ μάλιστα τοὺς Αἰγυπτίους αὐτῶν διὰ τὸ πολυαρκὲς τῆς ταριχείας. The translation is a combination of the translations by H. W. and F. G. Fowler and by A. Harmon, with a few additional modifications.

10 ἅπαντες γὰρ ἀτεχνῶς ἀλλήλοις γίγνονται ὅμοιοι τῶν ὀστῶν γεγυμνωμένων […] ἔκειντο δ' ἐπ' ἀλλήλοις ἀμαυροὶ καὶ ἄσημοι […] πολλῶν ἐν ταὐτῷ σκελετῶν κειμένων καὶ πάντων ὁμοίως φοβερόν τι καὶ διάκενον δεδορκότων καὶ γυμνοὺς τοὺς ὀδόντας προφαινόντων. For the translation, see the preceding note.

11 "I knew not how to tell Thersites apart from the beautiful Nireus or the beggar Iros from the king of the Phaeacians, or the cook Pyrrhias from Agamemnon" (ἠπόρουν πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν ᾧτινι διακρίναιμι τὸν Θερσίτην ἀπὸ τοῦ καλοῦ Νιρέως ἢ τὸν μεταίτην Ἶρον ἀπὸ τοῦ Φαιάκων βασιλέως ἢ Πυρρίαν τὸν μάγειρον ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἀγαμέμνονος). For the translation, see note 9.

Yet a little later this difficulty seems to have vanished, and Menippos reports with no little pleasure his encounters with quite a number of famous dead from myth and history (*Nec.* 17–18).[12] He evidently enjoys seeing VIPs like King Maussolos of Karia, King Philip of Macedon and other great rulers reduced to menial occupations (like elementary teaching and repairing shoes) and even to begging (*Nec.* 17). He also comes across prominent philosophers like Socrates and Diogenes who apparently quite enjoy themselves (*Nec.* 18).

Finally – prompted by a question of his interlocutor – Menippos turns to relating the decree that was passed by the assembly of the dead (*Nec.* 19–20) and to which he had alluded at the beginning of his account. The full wording of this decree is given in Chapter 20: it establishes severe punishments for the wickedness and evil deeds of the rich. Interestingly both their souls and their bodies are to be punished (so they still do have bodies in the afterlife?): their bodies are to be subjected to the same tortures as that of the other wrongdoers, while their souls are to be reincarnated in the bodies of asses for 25,000 years and as such to be maltreated by the poor – only after this long period will they be allowed to die "finally."

After this almost social-revolutionary touch, Menippos relates the last leg of his Underworld journey (which was also his primary aim): his consultation of Teiresias (*Nec.* 21). The Theban seer at first does not want to answer Menippos' question about what kind of life is best for human beings on earth, because he fears reprisals from Rhadamanthys, but as Menippos does not stop begging, he finally relents, draws Menippos into a dark corner and divulges what apparently is a most dangerous secret: the best life by far on earth is – that of an utterly normal human, not aspiring to high office and honour or caring about philosophical subtleties, but simply seeking to make one's current situation as pleasant as possible, laughing a lot and taking nothing really seriously.

After this momentous revelation Menippos returns to the upper world: his Babylonian guide very conveniently shows him a shortcut that leads into the cave of Trophonios, which, of course, is situated in Boeotia right in the middle of Greece (and thus quite a long way off from their point of descent in the marshes of the Euphrates!). With the help of this shortcut Menippos' *katabasis* comes to an unexpectedly sudden but happy end (*Nec.* 22).

12 Before these chapters, Menippos – prompted by seeing all these almost indistinguishable dead on the Acherusian Plain – muses about the general human condition and its utter subjectedness to fate and fortune (*Nec.* 16).

Shorter Variations: *Philopseudeis*

While *Menippos, or: The Descent Into Hades* presents both a very elaborate and rather 'orthodox' version of a *katabasis*, we find two further (though also shorter and in some points deficient) versions of the theme in the dialogue *The Lovers of Lies, or: The Unbeliever* (*Philopseudeis*), in which an ostensibly honourable gathering of solemn philosophers in the house of a just as ostensibly honourable rich man enjoys itself by both relating and listening to ever more weird and tall tales. One of these (an 'almost-*katabasis*') is told by the rich host Eukrates himself (*Philops*. 22–24): one day, when he was out hunting alone and deep in the woods, he suddenly heard a barking of dogs and then – after an earthquake and a thunderclap – he saw a gigantic woman approaching; she had snake-feet and snake-hair, a Gorgon-like stare, and she was holding a mighty torch and a big sword in her hands, and was accompanied by hounds bigger than elephants (*Philops*. 22). Fortunately he retained his presence of mind and turned the magic ring he wore on one hand to the inside, and this made the giant woman (she was, of course, the goddess Hekate, as we already might have guessed from her description and as is later explicitly confirmed) stamp on the ground (with her snake feet!) and thus produce a mighty chasm, into which the terrible apparition then jumped. Fearlessly, Eukrates dared to look into the chasm (wisely clinging to a nearby growing tree, so as not to topple into the abyss) and thus was able to see nearly everything Hades contains: "the River Pyriphlegethon, the lake, Kerberos, the dead, so as to even recognize some of them; in any case, I clearly saw my father still wearing the very clothes in which we had buried him" (*Philops*. 24).[13] Questioned by the enraptured Platonic philosopher Ion, Eukrates adds even more details which are very reminiscent of Menippos' *katabasis*: he sees the souls – portioned into "tribes and clans" – spending their time together with friends and lying on the Meadow of Asphodel. He also claims to have seen Socrates, judging from the appearance of a "bald and pot-bellied" individual (and who else could this be but Socrates?), but he soberly adds that he is not sure that he saw Plato as well. After he has seen all this (just like Odysseus was able to peer deep into the Underworld in the Nekyia in the *Odyssey*), the chasm finally closes up and thus ends Eukrates' 'almost-*katabasis*'.

This wonderful tale is, however, immediately topped by an even more wonderful story related by the Peripatetic philosopher Kleodemos who evidently feels obliged to go one better (*Philops*. 25): once when he was quite ill by a fever and lying alone on his sickbed, suddenly a beautiful young man in a gleaming white cloak appeared and led him through a chasm (once again) into Hades; that it

13 The translations of this chapter have been taken from A. M. Harmon and modified.

really *was* Hades, Kleodemos recognized immediately when he saw the famous wrongdoers Tantalos, Tityos and Sisyphos being punished there (Menippos had seen those people, too). Then he came to the Court of the Dead (with Aiakos and Charon, the Fates and the Erinyes in attendance) and was led before King Plouton himself – who, however, immediately recognized that Kleodemos had been summoned too early and therefore sent him back into the upper world.

These two tales rather neatly supplement each other: taken together, they offer a shorter version of what Menippos saw and experienced in his more elaborately told *katabasis*.

From *Katabasis* to *Para-basis:* The Islands of the Beyond in *True Stories*, Book II

So far the Underworld visited in these *katabaseis* is the 'traditional' one, the main features of which are already present in Books 11 and 24 of the *Odyssey*. In our next instance, however, we get a kind of 'lateral' *katabasis* (perhaps we might call it a *para-basis*?), where the Beyond that is being visited is not 'under' our earth (and thus approachable from more or less any spot above it), but situated in a very remote corner of the vast Western seas of our world. This is actually not a new feature in the *katabasis* tradition: already in the *Odyssey* (again), Odysseus has to take his ship from apparently the easternmost point of earth-girding Okeanos, i.e. from the island of Kirke (*Odyssey* 12.3–4; 10.507–8) to the northernmost one and to the gloomy and mist-enshrouded shore of the Kimmerians, in order to find the entrance to the Underworld where he can meet Teiresias and ask him about his future.

A kind of latter-day Odysseus is the first-person narrator of the wonderful tales of Lucian's *True Stories* (*Verae Historiae*), whom we may call (for simplicity's sake) 'Lucian' as well. At the beginning of the second book of the *True Stories*, this 'Lucian' finds himself and his crew far-out in Western seas and in the belly of a mighty sea-monster, which had gulped down his ship with all aboard in the latter part of the first book. Desperately longing to escape out of this gigantic animal, Lucian and his crew finally manage to kill it by burning it from the inside out and to manoeuvre the ship through its gaping mouth again into the open sea (*VH* 2.1–2). They then sail on and after traversing several peculiar maritime regions,[14] they approach a group of

14 They first have to brave a frozen sea (*VH* 2.2), after which they pass into a sea of milk with an island in it made of solid cheese and grapevines on it producing milk as well (*VH* 2.3). After another eight days' sailing the leave the sea of milk and come into 'normal' water

six islands that are truly 'beyond' everything else in this world, as our travellers soon recognize: the nearest of them emits wonderful fragrances as they approach (*VH* 2.5), and turns out to be nothing less than the paradisiacal Isle of the Blessed itself – it presents amazingly tranquil harbours, delightful rivers, woods and meadows, birds emitting melodious tunes, sweet air and pleasant breezes (ibid.). As our visitors do not naturally belong to this otherworldly place, their experience in the following chapters is both structurally and in many details (as we will see) the same as that of someone making a *katabasis* into a subterranean Beyond.[15]

First, Lucian and his crew have to gain entrance. Right after they have disembarked, they encounter guards (φρουροί), who bind them with garlands made of roses and lead them to a court presided over by the mythical hero Rhadamanthys, who decides the fate of those who want to gain entry to the Isle of the Blessed (*VH* 2.6) – so this court is an adaptation of the Court of the Dead presided over by King Minos which we already saw in action in the *katabasis* of Menippos. After witnessing three other cases,[16] their own case is decided: our earthly visitors are permitted to stay for seven months (*VH* 2.10).

As they are thus allowed to roam freely across the island during that time, we now get a description of its main settlement (which is even called a 'polis') and its surroundings (*VH* 2.11), of the peculiar physical condition of its inhabitants (they are souls without bodies but present the visual aspect of the age in which they arrived, *VH* 2.12), of the dawn-like twilight which permanently prevails on the island and the atmosphere of everlasting spring (ibid.), of the lush and almost 'Cockaigne-like' vegetation (with springs of water, honey and perfume, and rivers of milk and wine; *VH* 2.13), of the never-ending symposium being celebrated on the meadow of the so-called Elysian Plain (*VH* 2.14) with its exquisite musical entertainment, exhibiting on the one hand the best of Greek poetry and on the other nature's best singers,[17] while two adjacent springs – one providing laughter, the other joy – ensure that everybody present really enjoys himself (*VH* 2.16).

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again: here they meet the so-called "corkfeet people" who run about on the water on feet of cork (*VH* 2.4). They also get a brief glimpse of their home island (called Φελλώ in Greek, i.e. "Cork").

15 In his commentary on the *True Stories*, von Möllendorff 2000, 285, n. 9 at least implicitly recognizes the *katabasis*-like quality of this episode.

16 These involve mythical heroes like the Telamonian Ajax, Theseus and Menelaos, but also historical figures like Alexander the Great and Hannibal the Carthaginian (*VH* 2.7–9).

17 Swans and swallows and nightingales, with the soft sound of moving tree branches in the background (*VH* 2.15).

After these more general features, we hear more about individual inhabitants of this wonderful place (just as we did in Menippos' *katabasis*): there are present all the famous mythical heroes and fighters from the Trojan War (except for the few really evil ones like the Locrian Ajax), as well as great historical rulers and sages (again with exceptions like the tyrant Periandros). Socrates is there, too (still taking much delight, as in his earthly days, in the company of handsome adolescents), while Plato prefers to stay aloof in his own city (*VH* 2.17). Of other philosophical sects, especially the hedonists from the schools of Aristippus and Epicurus like it here; so does – quite remarkably – the Cynic Diogenes who now lives in happy marriage with the famous courtesan Lais, while the Stoics are absent (they still try to ascend the steep hill of Virtue), as are also the Sceptics (they still doubt whether this Island exists at all; *VH* 2.18). The picture is rounded off by remarks on the erotic customs of the inhabitants: in this respect they all are most Platonic because they are happy to share all the women and handsome boys (*VH* 2.19).

There follows a remarkable encounter of the first-person narrator with the great Homer, in which Lucian shows himself quite knowledgeable about various aspects of the Homeric Question (*VH* 2.20).[18] Further episodes during the stay of Lucian and his crew narrate the arrival of Pythagoras and Empedokles (*VH* 2.21), the celebration of athletic and musical games,[19] and even the successful defence of the island against an onslaught by an army of evildoers that has surprisingly escaped from the "Place of the Wicked" (*VH* 2.23–4).

After this, however, events unfold that lead to the expulsion of our visitors from this wonderful island: a younger member of Lucian's crew becomes romantically involved with none other than the famous (or infamous) Helen of Troy. Assisted by three others of Lucian's crew, they decide to elope, but before they get too far, they are caught and brought back, and the four male perpetrators are sent to the 'Place of the Wicked' for eternal punishment, while Lucian and the rest of his crew (as associates of the culprits) are ordered to leave the Isle of the Blessed within the next few days (*VH* 2.25–27).

This is, of course, a rather disagreeable end to their stay, but on the other hand it also enables them to round off their peculiar sort of *katabasis*: already Menippos had a look at the place where the famous transgressors of myth and other wrongdoers are punished in Hades, and now Lucian and his crew, after departing from the Isle of the Blessed, visit one of the five "Islands of the Impious,"[20] which is

18 On this, see Nesselrath 2002.

19 The Thanatusia, an apparently regularly recurring event like the Panhellenic games on Earth (*VH* 2.22).

20 The name is given in *VH* 2.27.

described in graphic and lurid detail (*VH* 2.29–31). After this, they sail on and visit yet many other peculiar (though not so otherworldly) islands lying in the vast Western ocean, until a sudden storm dashes their ship onto the shore of the unknown continent on the opposite side of the ocean, where the second book of Lucian's *True Stories* ends.

Katabasis Inverted: The *Anabasis* of Charon

After this *para-basis*, Lucian even presents us with a downright inversion of a *katabasis* (which we might therefore call an *anabasis*): in the dialogue *Charon*, the title character – none other than the famous ferryman of the Underworld himself – for once actually ascends into our world, where he meets the messenger of the gods Hermes (who as *psychopompos* usually goes down to him and delivers ever new groups of just deceased people) and persuades him (after some pleading) to give him a tour of this Upperworld so that he may better understand the (sometimes) strange habits of the dead humans he always has to carry across the Acheron.

In a number of respects, Charon's singular adventure can really be seen as the inversion of a *katabasis* like that undertaken by Menippos. First of all, Menippos needed a Babylonian magician to guide him into and through the Underworld; for Charon, Hermes will fulfil a similar function. Secondly, while Menippos had to get very deep down to see the numerous details of Underworld life, Charon on the contrary has to get very high up to get a good look at the details of earthly human life. To achieve this ascension, Hermes recites the two verses in which Homer (in *Odyssey* 11.315–16) describes how the gigantic Aloads piled Mount Pelion upon Mount Ossa to get access to heaven (*Char.* 4) – thus, Hermes uses these verses as a magic incantation to get Charon high enough above ground, in the same way as Menippos' magician employed his spell to get Menippos down into Hades.[21]

After a further Homeric incantation by Hermes (*Char.* 7), Charon is able to spot individual people who stand out for various reasons from the multitude, but – having never been on Earth before – he has to ask Hermes who they are. He does so by now using Homeric verse material himself, which he quite

21 The result of this operation, however, (even after two more mountains have been added) is still unsatisfactory, because Charon is now so high up that he cannot see any details! Therefore Hermes employs another two Homeric verses (this time *Iliad* 5.127–28) to give Charon real sharpness of sight as well (*Charon* 7).

cleverly adapts (in a parodistic way) to suit his purposes.[22] This is in fact rather interesting, because Charon is thus able to do with these verses just what Cynic philosophers like Crates of Thebes and Menippos did: ingeniously distort these verses to suit their own purposes. And it is not only in this literary ability that Lucian's Charon very much resembles the Cynic Menippos: in the further course of the dialogue, he will also express very Cynic sentiments about the short-sightedness and folly of humankind.

After Charon has thus revealed his unexpected ability to use Homeric verse, in the next few chapters he employs it to ask about various individuals that strike his eye: the famous wrestler Milon of Kroton (*Char.* 8), Cyrus the founder of the Persian Empire, and the Lydian King Croesus whom Cyrus vanquished (*Char.* 9). At this point Hermes lets Charon eavesdrop on the famous conversation between Croesus and the Athenian sage Solon, as it is reported by Herodotos (*Char.* 10).[23] Hermes and Charon even listen in on a bit of conversation between Croesus and Solon that was *not* recorded by Herodotos: in it, Solon points out that the god Apollo really has no need of Croesus' gold and that Croesus himself would be much better advised if he rather cared for having enough weapons of iron in the case of a Persian attack on his realm (*Char.* 12).

After this, Hermes informs Charon about what will happen to Croesus not too long after this conversation: he will be defeated by Cyrus and placed on a pyre to be burnt;[24] Cyrus himself however – Hermes goes on – will hardly fare better: he will be defeated by the barbarian queen Tomyris, and his severed head will be put into a wine-skin full of blood; moreover, Cyrus' son Cambyses will go mad, commit multiple acts of violence and sacrilege and finally die because he killed the bull Apis venerated as a god by the Egyptians (*Char.* 13). The next to be watched by our inquisitive pair is the tyrant Polykrates of Samos, as he is just getting back his beloved ring (which he had thrown into the sea),

22 Hermes is quite astonished by Charon's 'para-poetic' abilities, and Charon gives him a rather scurrilous explanation for them (*Charon* 7): when he had to take the great Homer himself across the Underworld river, the dead poet could not refrain from reciting his own verses in which he described a gathering tempest on sea (*Odyssey* 5.291–96) – with the unwelcome result that such a tempest now also broke loose over the Underworld river, almost overturning Charon's ferry and making Homer vomit all his precious verses, so that Charon could pick up quite a few of them.

23 When Hermes then points out Croesus' famous gift of golden plinths to the Oracle of Delphi, Charon can only wonder why humans set so much store by this curious substance, i.e. gold (*Charon* 11).

24 Hermes omits to add that (in Herodotos, at least) Croesus escapes this dire fate because the burning pyre is extinguished by divine intervention just in time.

after his cook found it in a fish. This amazing piece of luck, however (Hermes predicts), will soon be followed by dire catastrophe, as Polykrates is fated to be betrayed and killed by the Persian satrap Oroites (*Char.* 14).

Our two watchers then turn to observe humans' behaviour in general (*Char.* 15–16), just as Menippos commented on the general condition of the dead in his *katabasis*.[25] And as in the case of Menippos, these observations lead Hermes to general musings about the ridiculous frailty of the human condition (*Char.* 17): as long as they are enjoying themselves, humans seem totally incapable of looking ahead and of understanding how quickly their good fortune might change, how near in fact death (with its myriad helpers) is to all of them. Charon wholeheartedly agrees with these observations and adds some of his own on the precariousness and easy ruin especially of prominent rulers (*Char.* 18). He even develops a colourful simile of his own (*Char.* 19): humans are like bubbles produced by water falling down – some are bigger and last longer than others, but all will burst in the end. By all this Charon now feels impelled to directly address these humans and remind them of the brevity and vanity of their lives (*Char.* 20), but Hermes points out that this would be a useless enterprise (*Char.* 21).[26]

At the end, Charon still has a few open questions. He asks Hermes to show him the grave monuments of humans and then wonders why they make such elaborate offerings of food and drink in front of them (*Char.* 22). When Hermes answers that humans believe that the dead at certain times come back to partake of these offerings, Charon very sarcastically comments on these foolish beliefs: he would be hard-pressed indeed, if he had not only to ferry all the dead into Hades but also regularly ferry them back again to such meals! In another quite skilful parody of Homeric verses, he stresses the utterly different condition of the dead vis-à-vis the living and the total sameness of this condition for them all (a very Cynic belief). When he asks Hermes about the big and thriving cities he hears the dead so often talk about, he learns that death is the ultimate fate not only for human individuals but also for them (*Char.* 23). He gets his final impression of human folly when he sees Spartans and Argives furiously fighting for a small scrap of territory (this refers again to a famous episode in Herodotos 1.82) and never giving a thought to how little of that space

25 All human beings turn out to be dominated by manifold fears, hopes, passions, emotions and stupidities and ultimately dangling on the Fates' invisible, but also unbreakable threads which are often intertwined with each other.

26 Hermes' reasoning is the following: there are, in fact, some humans who are aware of their condition and act accordingly. These do not need Charon's admonishments, while all the others simply would not listen.

they will have after death. Charon ends his *anabasis* (which was quite as eye-opening for him as the *katabasis* for Menippos) with the exclamation: "How the things of these miserable humans are: kings, golden bricks, funeral rites, battles – and no thought of Charon at all!"[27]

In these pieces, then, Lucian exhibits an admirable versatility in his handling of the *katabasis* theme – of which the preceding pages may (I hope) have shown at least a few aspects.

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27 This exclamation, of course, takes up Xanthias' complaint in Aristophanes, *Frogs* 88, 108 and 116.

Chapter 13

From Hades to Hell

Christian Visions of the Underworld (2nd–5th centuries CE)

Zissis D. Ainalis

When men and women of the Graeco-Roman world in the first century got word about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, something about that story rang a bell. After all, some of the greatest heroes of their literature and their religion had gone to the Underworld and returned alive. Odysseus and Aeneas, Herakles and Orpheus – they all went to Hades in search of the dead. Glen Bowersock is certainly right when he insists that the great difference between Jesus and all the others was that he was *dead*, that he *really* died and was resurrected, and that the notion of resurrection was strange and absurd to Graeco-Roman perception.[1] However, this central event of Christianity inevitably called to mind the great characters of the Graeco-Roman tradition and, in this sense, eased the way for the acceptance of this new Semitic religion by Graeco-Roman society. This process will here be primarily illustrated by three texts: the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the *Vision of Paul* and the *Life of Saint Macarius the Roman*. While these works belong in different centuries and to some extent in different literary traditions, they all display the way in which the Graeco-Roman heritage was recognized, used and developed in the Late Antique and early Byzantine tradition.

The Gospel of Nicodemus

From early on, Christians started to speculate about the passage of Jesus to the Kingdom of Death. Initially it may have been a taboo to call it Hades, but custom and tradition eventually prevailed. The Greek-speaking population of the Roman Empire continued to call the Underworld Hades and the new Christians began to wonder what the founder of their religion had done during the three days he spent there. These spiritual inquiries are well reflected in the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, probably written by the middle of the

1 Bowersock 1994, 99–119. See also the contribution by Johnston in this volume.

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second century CE.[2] The *Gospel of Nicodemus* seems to be the earliest known depiction of the Christian Underworld and, moreover, the first narrative of a Christian round trip to Hades, in the sense that Jesus himself arrived there and then left.

In the second part of this apocryphal story, Annas and Caiaphas are questioning Joseph (of Arimathea?) about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Joseph replies that Jesus' resurrection is not the most incredible of his deeds; indeed, his most exceptional deed is that he resurrected also many others, notably from Arimathea. So Annas and Caiaphas left for Arimathea, where they started questioning the resurrected ones, writing down their stories. The resurrected ones had been to Hades (we cannot fail to notice the name), where all those who had died in the past centuries were present and the prophets were lazily talking to each other. To this place came Satan and started talking to Hades (note the typically Greek conception, according to which Hades is a place *and* a person). Satan was trying to convince Hades to collaborate with him in order to take drastic measures and prevent Jesus Christ from resurrecting more people. This pitiful scheme turned out to be ineffective. Christ arrived, entered Hades (the place), arrested Satan and bossed around the 'old' god Hades. Then Christ took with him Adam and all those who had died because of Satan's tricks and transferred them to Paradise where he delivered them to the care of Archangel Michael. Accordingly, Christ left – together with the patriarchs, the prophets and the rest of the righteous – for Paradise, leaving Hades (the place) half-empty and forcing Hades (the god) to guard Satan. This was all that the resurrected had seen.

In the *Gospel of Nicodemus* we note, first of all, that there is not yet a concept of Hell. Hades is the typical Graeco-Roman Underworld, where the place and its master go by the same Classical name. Consequently, there is no description of this place. The reader or listener of the time was left to create in his mind his own picture of the Underworld, according to his own cultural perceptions and representations. The only characteristic we are offered is that Hades is a dark place in sharp contrast with the luminosity of Jesus. Second, after arriving and disturbing the 'normality' of the traditional abode of the dead, Jesus leaves Hades (the god) as a supervisor and delivers Satan to him, arrested and chained, as a prisoner to guard. I argue that it is precisely this detail that generated the concept of Hell, because one can legitimately assume that Satan corrupted Hades, managed to free himself and took command of his space. In any case, in all later representations of the Christian Underworld (with the notable exception of a hymn by Romanos Melodos),[3] Hades (the god) is absent and Satan rules the place.

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2 Tischendorf 1853, 266–311; English translation by James 1924.

3 "The Victory of the Cross," De Matons 1967. Cf. Frank 2009, 220–22.

The *Vision of Paul*

The *Vision* (or *Apocalypse*) *of Paul* (not to be confused with the Coptic-Gnostic *Revelation of Paul*) is the next text to describe a Christian vision of the afterlife. It was probably written in the last decades of the third century, but has been preserved in a version that cannot be earlier than the second half of the fourth century (since it mentions the Emperor Theodosios, 379–395).[4] The narrative is framed by a well-known literary device: a person of some authority finds a hidden manuscript, in which an unknown text of a great writer or an important man has been preserved. In this case, a certain officer who by chance lives in the house in which St. Paul used to live in Tarsus finds the text of the *Vision* and delivers it to the city's magister. The magister, in turn, understands its importance and sends it to the emperor. In the discovered text, Paul describes his experiences from the time when he "ascended to the third sky" (or the third heaven) (2 Cor. 12:2). During this mental journey, an angel assumes the role of his guide – just as the Roman poet Vergil does for Dante some eight centuries later. First, Paul attends the "judgment of the souls," where he observes how the judgment of the souls of the righteous and the sinners is done. Then he is transferred to the "City of the Righteous," which is described as a true Roman city bathed in light.

After that, Paul is transported to the place where the souls of the sinners and the unbelievers are imprisoned, namely Hell. In contrast with the luminosity of the "City of the Righteous," Hell is a dark and bleak place. There is a river with boiling water, where countless people, men and women, are immersed, some to their knees, others to their navel or even their head. When Paul asks the angel who these people are, he replies that they are all those that lived "unrepentantly in fornications and adulteries" (οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ ἐν πορνείαις καὶ μοιχείαις ἀμετανόητοι ζήσαντες).[5] There is another river, blazing and fiery, where even more are immersed, "all the thieves and liars and slanderers" and, generally speaking, all those that during their lives had riches and money as their prime interest. At this view, Paul starts to cry and the angel chastises him and makes him look carefully at the river. He then sees an old man being dragged violently by the angel Temelouchos who, with an iron bar, has pulled out his entrails by his mouth. When Paul asks the angel about this terrible punishment, he replies that the old man was a priest who neglected his duties and was eating and drinking while in the

4 Tischendorf 1856, 34–69. On the *Vision of Paul*, see also the contribution by Graf in the present volume.

5 Tischendorf 1856, 57.

service of God. After that follows a bishop and a deacon who are tormented with even greater brutality for their misconduct.

Paul is then taken to another place in Hell, where men and women are biting and eating their tongues – those who gossiped in the church during mass instead of listening to the words of God. Next, Paul stands before a cesspool full of blood, filled with people who poisoned others, and with sorcerers, fornicators and adulterers and all those who oppressed or murdered widows and orphans. A woman, dressed from head to toe in black, is taken to a very dark place – a woman who disobeyed her parents and lost her virginity before her marriage. Other women, dressed in white, are impaled on fiery obelisks and blinded, constantly hurt by an angel (the text is not precise about the nature of this torment). These are the women who committed suicide or killed their babies; the same infants who then enter the scene crying and screaming and claiming vengeance.

This highly unpleasant scene is suddenly interrupted and Paul is taken before a well, closed by seven seals. The angel asks the angel guarding the well to open the seven seals so that Paul can see. As the seals are opened, a terrible stench takes Paul by surprise. The guardian angel says:

> Inside this well that you are looking at is a godforsaken place which is not guarded by the angels of God. For there are all those who do not confess Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ and the Holy Sacraments. […] Here is only death and tears and gnashing of the teeth and tortures. […] There are kept all those who do not believe in Resurrection and therefore there will be no mercy or resurrection for them.[6]

Hearing this, Paul cries bitterly and, looking up in despair, sees the skies opening and Archangel Gabriel arriving with an army of angels. Instantly, all those who are tortured in Hell cry to Gabriel for mercy. Gabriel replies: "In thy name of God I labour incessantly for the human kind. However, I cannot do anything for all those that erred and sinned during their lives. I can only cry with Paul and pray to God for mercy." Upon this, the heavens tremble like leaves and God appears on his throne with his son by his side. "All the sinners begged for mercy and Jesus Christ, complying with Gabriel and Paul, gave them Sunday free of tortures."[7]

After this, the angel takes Paul to Paradise. Unfortunately, the surviving text is mutilated, so we cannot know how Paul returned after his trip to the third

6 Tischendorf 1856, 62.

7 Tischendorf 1856, 62–63.

Heaven. In any case, we must note that Paul's trip is mental and not physical. Paul has a revelation and it is through the intervention of the Holy Spirit that he is transported to the third Heaven. This is the main difference to the next tale we shall consider, which is clearly inspired by the *Vision of Paul*: the curious *Life of Saint Macarius the Roman* (*BHG* 1004).[8] A recent proposal dates this *Life* as early as the beginning of the fifth century, while previous dating ranges from the sixth to as late as the tenth century.[9] Given that this hagiographical narrative remains rather neglected and unknown, I shall offer a relatively detailed summary of its basic plot before I move on to an analysis and interpretation.

Life of Saint Macarius the Roman

The basic story runs as follows. Three monks, retired to a monastery in Mesopotamia, wish to travel to the end of the world. After a rather traditional pilgrimage to Jerusalem, they cross the Arabic desert and arrive at Ctesiphon on the east bank of the Tigris.[10] So far, the journey is realistically described; I call this first part "the territory of the Others."[11] In the next part of the journey, which may be termed "the territory of the barbarians," the monks enter the less known and rather imaginary world of the Indians – a description inspired by earlier literature, especially the *Alexander Romance*. The third part of the journey, which I call "the territory of the humanoids,"[12] loses any connection to reality as the monks meet the *Kynokephaloi* (Dog-Heads), known from both the *Alexander Romance* and other ancient sources.[13] Noble savages, the *Kynokephaloi* do not trouble the travelers, but regard them with curiosity.[14] The fourth part of the text, "the territory of the monsters and wonders," is firmly

8 Bibliography on this *Life* remains limited, see Kazhdan and Constable 1982, 43; Dagron 1990; Rydén 1996; Angelidi 2012. More recently Roilos 2014, 19–23. For the Latin *Vita*, see Elliott 1987, 63–66, 110–16 and 122–25.

9 Ainalis 2014, 329–39; cf. Angelidi 2012, 169–70; Kazhdan and Constable 1982, 43; Vassiliev 1893, XXXVIII.

10 Here they visit the tombs of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – the fiery furnace. Cf. *Alexander Romance*, recension β, II.18 (Bergson).

11 In this part, the actual neighbors of the Byzantine Empire, the Persians, are realistically described. For the representation of the 'neighboring other' in ancient Greek literature, see Hartog 1980.

12 Cf. Dagron 1990, 63–64.

13 Cf. Roilos 2014, 16–18.

14 Cf. Photius, cod. 72 (on Ktesias, *Indika*; Henri 1959, 142); see also *Alexander Romance*, recension γ, II.34 (Engelmann).

inscribed in the tradition of the "wonders of the East."[15] The monks encounter all sorts of creatures, known from ancient and medieval lore: serpents, adders, basilisks, unicorns, centaurs and dragons. Then they arrive at a "place where no light shines"[16] – a white dove sent by God guides them through a deep mist and after three days they arrive at a gate with the following inscription:

> Alexander, king of the Macedonians, erected this arch (ἀψίδα), as he was chasing from Carthage to here the king of Persians like a beast. May he who wishes to go further always walk to the left, for all rivers of the world gush forth from the left side. May he who passes through follow the voice of rivers and he shall come to the light, but the places to the right are all mountains and cliffs and a lake full of snakes.[17]

Here, if not before, the connection to the story-world of the *Alexander Romance* becomes clear. The arch also ends rather symbolically the fourth part of the narrative and opens the fifth: since Alexander in the medieval imagination transcends the boundaries between human and divine elements, the Arch of Alexander here marks the end of the known world.[18] It also marks the end of the area of the Creation and the beginning of the territory of the Creator, because the fifth part presents nothing less than "the territory of Hell."

The first sign is the foul smell, the stench that makes breathing and living intolerable.[19] The monks hurry across these devilish lands, keeping always to the left, when they hear an unbearable din, like a thousand horses neighing.[20] They see an enormous pit filled with serpents and humans and hear human voices begging for mercy; a voice from the skies says: "This is the pit of Judgment and these are those who denied God."[21] Horrified, the monks move on and

15 Campbell 1988, 47–86; see also Romm 1994, 82–120.

16 Cf. *Alexander Romance*, recension β, II.38 (Bergson).

17 Vassiliev 1893, 142. Cf. *Alexander romance*, recension γ, II.41 (Engelmann). See also Philostratus, *Apollonius of Tyana*, II. 42–43 (trans. Jones).

18 Cf. *Alexander Romance*, recension γ, II.34 (Engelmann).

19 One of the most persistent characteristics of Hell according to medieval writers is the stench. See e.g. *The Voyages of St Brendan* (Barron and Burgess 2002, 55): "even when they could no longer see it, the howling of its denizens still reached their ears, and the stench of the fire assailed their nostrils." This text is obviously the occidental equivalent of the *Life of St Macarius*; in fact, the sole difference between the *Life* and the *Voyages* is that in the Eastern text one has to travel east, while in the Celtic text one travels west in order to find Paradise. See also the contribution by Graf in the present volume.

20 Cf. the sounds of Hades as discussed in the contribution by Bonnechere in this volume.

21 Vassiliev 1893, 143.

after other terrifying encounters – an enormous man shackled between two mountains[22] and a beautiful woman in a cesspit being hit by a dragon[23] – they eventually manage to cross Hell and arrive in a place with a magnificent tree. They thus enter the sixth part of their journey: "the territory of the servants of God."[24] They meet tall bearded men with swords and golden crowns: the keepers of God, guarding his Gates from serpents and other devilish beings till the Day of Judgment. There is a beautiful church with an angelic choir[25] and the monks rejoice and continue their journey. They arrive at a large river that seems impossible to cross, so they wait for sixty days on its bank with its water as their only sustenance.[26] Eventually they cross the river and arrive at the final stage of their journey, "the territory of the Holy Man and keeper of the Gates."

Now they finally meet Saint Macarius, a hermit who lives in a cave just outside the double wall that encloses Heaven. He is nude and his face is enveloped by long white hair, his nails are long and his aged skin like that of a turtle. But his voice is soft and he embraces and blesses the monks.[27] He explains that they have reached the end of their journey – the end of the human world: "there lie the gates of Paradise and no mortal man can advance any further this point."[28] Macarius introduces the surprised monks to his children, who turn out to be two enormous lions, and tells them the story of his life. Born in Rome as the son of a senator, he had escaped an arranged marriage on the wedding night, fled to Jerusalem and decided never to return home.[29] After a meeting with the

22 Judas, or perhaps rather a mixture of Prometheus and Judas, both traitors of God. Cf. *The Voyages of St Brendan* (Barron and Burgess 2002, 56–57).

23 The woman wears her hair down, the sign of a prostitute; see Cabrol and Leclerq 1920–1949, sv. 'chevelure', and Koukoules 1948, II, 125–27. Cf. Revelation 17:1–17.

24 The tree (Eliade 1952, 61–65) is filled with speaking birds who say that they sinned before God; see Vassiliev 1893, 145, and cf. *The Voyages of St Brendan* (Barron and Burgess 2002, 36).

25 Cf. *The Voyages of St Brendan* (Barron and Burgess 2002, 41). Note also that the Community of Ailbe mentioned in *The Voyages of St Brendan* (Barron and Burgess 2002, 55) has the same characteristics as the Church of Righteous in the *Life of St Macarius*.

26 Cf. Photios, *Bibliotheka*, cod. 72 (Henry 1959, 138). Several of the characteristics of the river seems to be drawn from Ktesias, *Indika*. See also Rougé 1966, 350, and *Life of St Zosimos* (Vassiliev 1893, 169).

27 The similarities between the physical description of Macarius and Paul, the hermit in *The voyages of St Brendan*, as well as the reception that they hold for the travellers, are astonishing (Barron and Burgess 2002, 59–60).

28 Vassiliev 1893, 152. Cf. Alexander romances, recension γ, II.40 (Engelmann).

29 The analogies with the *Life* of another Roman saint, Alexis, are impressive; see the *Life the Holy Man of God* (ed. Esteves Pereira). Just like the hermit Macarius, the hermit Paul in *The Voyages of St Brendan* abandons unnoticed the people who are close to him (Barron and Burgess 2002, 60–61).

Archangel Raphael[30] and various other adventures, Macarius had come to the place where the monks had now found him. He has survived on only half a loaf of bread and struggled with the temptations of the devil.[31] When the monks have listened to the story and marvelled at it, they return to Jerusalem and then to their monastery. And here ends the story of the journey of the three monks, a journey that goes beyond space, as it transcends the boundaries of the known world and enters the territory of God, but also beyond time, as it goes back to the immemorial depths of time in order to return to the origins of humanity: Paradise.

An Allegorical Journey to the Other Side

While the *Life of Saint Macarius the Roman* thus can be seen as an imaginary narrative which permits its readers to travel mentally through real and fantastic places, it is above all an elaborate, dark allegory filled with symbolism and hidden meanings.[32] The author took the topoi of ancient literature, and most notably the commonplaces found in the vast 'Alexander literature', and composed out of all this heterogeneous matter an elaborate and coherent Christian allegory with messianic and apocalyptic notes.[33] This is reflected also in the structure of the narrative; or rather, it is precisely the structure of the text that urges me to consider the text as an allegory.

To an ancient Greek, the world was organized according to a model of homocentric circles: in the first place, there was Delphi, the *omphalos* of the world,[34] which was placed in the middle of Hellas; then there was Hellas which was placed in the middle of the Mediterranean basin; then there was the Mediterranean which was placed in the middle of the *oikoumene* (the inhabited or inhabitable world, the Latin *orbis terrarum*); and finally there

30 Cf. Tobit 5:4–9. At his help Macarius has also an Onager, a great Stag and a Dragon, symbols of death and rebirth respectively; see Eliade 1952, 230; Puech 1949; Cabrol and Leclerq 1920–49, s.v. cerf.

31 Interestingly, Satan comes in the form of a young woman whose story reflects that of Macarius' own: "I am Maria, the daughter of a Roman senator, and my father sought to marry me against my will and I left my house and the guests the day of my wedding and I wandered for many a year and here I am now"; see Vassiliev 1893, 160.

32 The text indeed corresponds to the typology of allegory in Todorov 1970, 67–79.

33 I am rather convinced that the *Life of Saint Macarius the Roman* has a Gnostic origin and affiliations (cf. the Coptic-Gnostic *Revelation of Saint Paul* of the Nag Hammadi Corpus), but that question is beyond the scope of the present paper.

34 For the symbolism of *omphalos*, see Eliade 1969, 24–30.

was the *oikoumene* which was placed in the middle of the Earth. Of course, there were also the *Antipodes*, but this was actually a world *à l'inverse*.[35] By contrast, for a Late Antique or medieval person, the world was organized according to the model of the *climax*. The perception of the world as an imitation of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, which became popularized through the work of Cosmas Indicopleustes,[36] does not really modify this model of the *climax* since the principle is the same: the more we walk towards the back of the world (world-temple), that is towards the east, the more we come to sacred or 'sacrificed' territories, because of their closeness to God. The more we ascend the *climax*, the closer we come to God. Accordingly, the more we descend the *climax* of Creation, the more we recede from God. It is precisely this perception of the world organized according to the model of the *climax* that we encounter in the *Life of Saint Macarius the Roman*, since the more we march towards the East, the closer we come to God. This practically geometric perception is clearly reflected in the structure of the text.

As noted above, the *Life of Saint Macarius the Roman* is divided into 7 + 1 parts (the eighth being implied, but nonetheless present in the narrative), a division that corresponds to the division of the world into 7 + 1 parts:

1. The territory of the Others
2. The territory of the barbarians
3. The territory of the humanoids
4. The territory of the monsters and wonders
5. The territory of Hell
6. The territory of the servants of God
7. The territory of the keeper of the gates
8. Eden (Paradise)

As we can clearly see, each part of the text corresponds to each part of the journey of the three monks, which corresponds in turn to each part of the world. Moreover, just as each part of the world is distinguished from another with an important geographical marker of semantic polyvalence (a desert, a mountain, a river etc.), the text is divided by similarly important linguistic markers of some symbolic value. In addition, we notice that there is also an internal sub-division in 4 + 3 + 1 parts, and of course of the voyage and of the world, inside the primal division in 7 + 1 parts. The hub of this internal sub-division, as we

35 Romm 1994, 128–32.
36 See Wolska 1962 and, more recently, Kominko 2013.

have already seen, is the Arch of Alexander, which separates the territory of the Creation from the territory of the Creator.

The basic outlines of this allegory are relatively clear. In the footsteps of Orpheus, Odysseus, Aeneas, Herakles, Dionysos and of course Jesus Christ himself, the three monks undertake a voyage to the Otherworld, or more specifically to the other side of Death. In order to regain eternal life, one has to "go down" (to die) and be reborn.[37] This is one of the most ancient and basic concepts of all religions and it is represented symbolically in countless rituals across the world. In Christianity, this concept is represented by baptism. With baptism, the old man, Adam of the flesh descending into the water, dies in order to re-emerge from the water renewed, the new spiritual Adam. This procedure is represented in the *Life of Saint Macarius the Roman* mostly through the various beings that the monks encounter on their journey, making this text a kind of a rite of passage; a passage from Life to Death or more precisely from Death to Life, but also, and primarily, a passage from mundane to sacred, from human to divine.

In the last part of their journey in this world, that is, before passing through the Arch of Alexander and entering the divine territories, the monks arrive at a high mountain where the sun is not shining and there is no vegetation at all.[38] In Christian thought, the dragons, along with their companions, the adders and the basilisks, are traditionally considered personifications of Evil and Death, and in later iconographic representations they symbolize Satan and his companions.[39] After the reptiles, the monks come across some beings whose symbolism we cannot clearly grasp, but among them we recognize the unicorn and the centaur, which both had a certain connection with Death.[40] In the Hermetic literature and tradition, the unicorn was a constant symbol of Death, and it has the same function in the hagiographical novel *Barlaam and Joasaph*.[41] It is certainly not a coincidence that the same passage of *Barlaam and Joasaph* relates also to dragons and adders. As for the centaur, we know that it was a symbol of dark earthly powers and demons of the inferior world in the Graeco-Roman world.[42] After this dark and ghastly scenery, the monks descend the mountain and arrive at a desert,

37 For the *katabasis* motif in later Byzantine fiction, with a brief reference on the *Life of Saint Macarius the Roman*, see Moennig 2014, 163–82.

38 For the symbolism of the mountain, see Eliade 1969, 17–34.

39 See Cabrol and Leclerq 1920–49, s.v. "dragon."

40 See Canivet and Canivet 1979.

41 Cf. Mattingly and Woodward 1914, 188–90.

42 See Cabrol and Leclerq 1920–49, s.v "centaur."

which stretches as far as the eye can see. There they stay for sixty days, that is to say twenty times the time that the Savior stayed in the tomb. At this precise moment, they seem to have transgressed the limits between mundane and sacred, humane and divine, because a great stag appears before them out of nowhere and leads them, through hordes of elephants, to a place near the Arch of Alexander. There the stag leaves them and a white dove assumes their guidance. The symbolism of the white dove hardly needs to be addressed. The stag, on the other hand, is one of the most ancient symbols of the cyclic renewal of life and the world.[43] Apparently, the Christians assumed this significance because almost from the beginning of Christianity the stag was associated with baptism, which explains perfectly the systematic iconographic representation of the stag in baptisteries.[44] So there they are, the monks, before the Arch of Alexander, having symbolically crossed the miserable desert of human life and humanity, having left behind their fleshly selves and ready to enter the dominion of God, where in a chiastic parallel to the last part of their mundane trip they first have to cross Hell. Then follows the territory of the Servants of God, which is also marked by some of the most characteristic traits of the later Purgatory, and, finally the territory of the servant of God – the most worthy of his servants, the keeper of the gates.

This is the journey of the monks and the basic outlines of the narrative's symbolism. However, if we were to assume that each saint imitates a model of sanctity, as the martyrs tried to imitate the Son of God in his pain and suffering, where could we find the model that the three monks imitate? Here lies, I think, the greatest originality of this text. For the model for the three monks is set by the text itself: the voyage of the monks is a 'voyage within a voyage', to paraphrase a well-known verse of Edgar Allan Poe. It is Macarius whom they imitate – unknowingly – as their journey to Paradise reflects, step by step, his previous journey. The only difference is that the various beings that Macarius encounters on his own journey are different from the ones that the monks come across. They retain, however, the same symbolic function. Accordingly, in the case of Macarius we do not have a unicorn but an onager – the animal differs, but the function remains.[45] In a way, the entire journey was nothing but a rite of passage.

43 Eliade 1952, 230.

44 Puech 1949; Cabrol and Leclerq 1920–49, s.v. "cerf."

45 However, the stag remains the same (this reveals also something about the importance of symbolism).

Concluding Remarks

Based on these three texts, especially the *Vision of Paul* and the *Life of Saint Macarius the Roman*, we can assume that at the beginning of the fifth century (at least if we accept the hypothesis that the *Life* was composed at the beginning of the fifth century) the representation of Hell was somewhat fixed in the imaginary of the Christian population of the Roman Empire.[46] Its principal characteristics are darkness, stench, heat and torments. Other systematic elements of great symbolic importance are the cesspool, the well and the female figures (reminiscent of the *Vision*). Even more systematic is the typology of the sinners; we now know who they are and how they were tormented, along with a certain classification, a sort of hierarchy of sinners. The unbelievers are obviously the worst – there is no salvation for them. The priests of all grades follow; the higher up a sinning priest is placed in the hierarchy, the more he is tormented in Hell. In everyday life, the greedy, the thieves, the fornicators, the adulterers and the suicides are the worst. Paradoxically, murderers are only sporadically mentioned (for instance, when the authors refer to women who killed their babies or committed suicide while pregnant, or to men who killed widows and orphans). This obliges us to consider murder a rather rare crime in the fifth century, while feminine suicide seems to be a more persistent social problem.

In comparison with the *Vision of Paul*, the *Life of Saint Macarius* represents a great advancement in the representation and localization of the Christian Underworld: for the first time in Christian literature, the Underworld becomes physically accessible. The eager believer can find his way to Hell, to the "City of the Righteous" and even to the Gates of Paradise *in this world*. The Underworld thus acquires a geography. It is no longer accessible exclusively through revelation and the intervention of God, the Holy Spirit or the angels, but is placed on this earth (as was its pagan predecessor). Moreover, the 'Underworld' is no longer really an 'Underworld'; you no longer necessarily need to go *down* in order to find Hell – you simply travel eastwards or westwards, according to the starting point, to Hell or Paradise.

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46 Cf. Roilos 2014, 9–10.

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CHAPTER 14

The Virgin in Hades

Thomas Arentzen

One day the Virgin Mary prayed to see heaven and Hades. Her prayers were heard: "Hades gaped open, and she saw those who were being punished in Hades."[1] It is the *Apocalypse of the Theotokos* which thus relates how the Mother of God gets to experience the torments in the Underworld. Like the *Apocalypse of Anastasia*, it describes an afterlife where the condemned are almost bureaucratically punished. Mary visits the sinners to witness their suffering and to intercede for them or even to take their place.[2] With great compassion the Mother of God prays that Christ must let them go. With the publication of *Tales from Another Byzantium*, Jane Baun drew scholarly attention to these two popular Marian apocrypha, which were written sometime after the ninth century. In these apocalyptic visions the reader follows the Virgin to Hades. And yet, although the narratives are truly startling, they do not in any way represent the Byzantine Theotokos' first ventures into Hades.

Many of the Dormition narratives do admittedly imagine that the Virgin's soul was taken directly up into heaven by Christ. A direct ascension leaves little room for a visit to Hades in connection with her death. John of Damascus in the eighth century denies any relationship between Mary and death.[3] In the seventh-century Dormition homily by John of Thessalonike, however, the Archangel Michael holds Mary's soul in his hands while her separate dead body starts speaking with Christ (who is also present) on its own: "Remember me, King of glory! Remember me, that I am your creation; remember me that I guarded the treasure entrusted me."[4] In this version it is as if there is a liminal phase where death and life co-exist before the body is buried and then later resurrected. The preacher leaves room for a certain amount of death interaction. There is what Brian Daley calls a "*cultivated vagueness* about the event."[5] But there are even other ways of imagining the relationship between the Virgin and Hades. John of Damascus' contemporary Andrew of Crete, for instance,

1 *Apocalypse of the Theotokos* 3; trans. Baun 2007, 392.

2 See e.g. Baun 2007, 243–45.

3 John of Damascus, *Homily II on the Dormition* 3.

4 John of Thessalonike, *Homily on the Dormition* 12; trans. Daley 1998, 63.

5 Daley 1998, 27.

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has a very different version. The present article follows the Virgin in Hades motif backwards in history to see how far back into Late Antiquity it is possible to trace it. I start from the end of the ninth century – the earliest attested time for the apocalypses – and explore Mary's relationship with Hades according to a selection of liturgical texts.

While the Dormition narratives have attracted a certain amount of scholarly attention lately, the way in which Mary relates to Hades has hardly been discussed.[6] A brief search through modern Mariological literature confirms such an impression. Scholars who are trained in the field of theology (of whom I am one) often betray a strong impulse to read anything Marian metonymically. Whatever ancient writers say about the Theotokos concerns her only by extension. Ultimately, it all comes down to Christology, according to this line of reading. When the *Akathistos to the Mother of God*, for instance, exclaims to Mary "Hail, [you] through whom Hades was stripped naked,"[7] many instinctively interpret the Greek words δι' ἧς instrumentally: she did not strip Hades, but she bore a son who did. Commenting on a hymn by Romanos the Melodist, which explicitly identifies the Virgin as the new Paradise,[8] a scholar once wrote: "Romanos […] does not intend to identify Mary ontologically, but causally, with the new Paradise. […] Basically, this typology is Christological."[9] Yet, when Romanos actually states quite literally that Mary is the new Paradise, can we allow ourselves to say "He does not really mean that"? Such a Christological method has tended to eclipse the Virgin's connection with Hades. But what happens if we take the imagery in these Byzantine texts at face value, so to say, rather than perform a Christological operation of extension? I am not denying, of course, that a connection and relation between the mother Mary and her son Jesus persists in almost any conceivable form of a Christian world view, but I question – and will try to resist – the inclination to reduce the Virgin into a mere metonymical representation or extension of the Son.

In the Middle Byzantine apocalypses, God forms a frighteningly just and distant figure. The all-merciful Virgin must strive to convince him that he should take pity on his unruly creatures.[10] In the *Apocalypse of the Theotokos,* the deceased in Hades ask Mary: "How is it that you ask about us, O Holy Lady Theotokos? Your blessed Son came upon the earth and did not ask at all about us."[11] Similarly, in the *Apocalypse of Anastasia*, Wednesday and Friday,

6 E.g. Shoemaker 2003.

7 *Akathistos* 7.16: χαῖρε, δι' ἧς ἐγυμνώθη ὁ ᾍδης; my trans.

8 Romanos Melodos, *On the Nativity II* 7.3.

9 Reichmuth 1975, 63.

10 Baun 2007, 267–318.

11 *Apocalypse of the Theotokos* 4; trans. Baun.

as personified figures, ask God to judge everyone who breaks the fast. From the distance they hear a voice – God's voice – saying: "Cursed is that throat, the one that eats meat and cheese on Wednesday and Friday."[12] But then the Theotokos raises *her* voice: "Master, you should not hear the entreaty of holy Friday and holy Wednesday, and destroy the works of your hands, but you should send forth a sign."[13] Finally, God gives the human race this message through an angel: "I wanted to destroy you utterly from the earth, but through the entreaty of my wholly undefiled mother […] I was reconciled."[14] The authors of the apocalypses envisioned the Mother of God as an intercessory figure in Hades. Earlier representations, however, have other ways to imagine her in the Underworld.

The *Kanon of the Akathistos* by Joseph the Hymnographer (c. 816–886)

Joseph the Hymnographer was born in Sicily, but as a young monk he moved to Constantinople, where he established a monastery and later became attached to the Hagia Sophia.[15] He composed a vast number of hymns, and his biographers attempted to parallel his life with that of Romanos, the great hymnographer of the sixth century.[16] Among his most famous works is the *Kanon of the Akathistos*. The hymn is not to be confused with the earlier *Akathistos* hymn mentioned above, with which it resonates. Today these two compositions are usually performed together during Lent in the Byzantine rite, but they represent different genres and probably different periods as well; while the former is a *kanon*, the latter can be classified as a *kontakion*.[17]

Joseph's hymn comprises a series of praises for the Virgin, arranged, as other kanons, into nine odes. Mary is praised as the "restoration of Adam and death

12 *Apocalypse of Anastasia* 26; trans. Baun.

13 *Apocalypse of Anastasia* 28.

14 *Apocalypse of Anastasia* 48.

15 For an introduction to Joseph's life and work, see Tomadakis 1971; for a more recent bibliography, see Frøyshov 2013a.

16 Ševčenko 1998, 101–2.

17 There is no agreement about the dating and author of the *Akathistos*, but Peltomaa (2001) suggests that it was composed in the early 5th c.; in any case it had already been translated into Latin by the time Joseph wrote his kanon (Conomos 2013). For an introduction to the Constantinopolitan hymn genre kontakion, see Frøyshov 2013b, and for the kanon genre and its Jerusalemite origin, see idem 2013c.

of Hades (τοῦ ᾄδου ἡ νέκρωσις)" (1.4).[18] The hymn uses metaphors which evoke urban images of the Underworld; Hades resembles a city surrounded by defensive walls. Like a warrior, the Virgin attacks and crushes Hades' gates, rendering it open and penetrable:

> Hail, [Mary] only gate through which the Word alone has passed!
> By your birth-giving, Sovereign Lady (Δέσποινα), you smashed the bars and gates of Hades (ἡ μοχλοὺς καὶ πύλας ᾄδου).
> Hail, all-praised, divine entrance (ἡ θεία εἴσοδος) of the saved![19]

Various gates and penetrations intersect in these lines, and the relationship between the different gates is both complex and ambiguous. First, there is the gate of Mary's body. The Marian gate constitutes an important image in Joseph's *oeuvre*, as it does in other Christian poets of the period.[20] According to the prophetic book of Ezekiel, God says: "This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut."[21] Based on this vision, late ancient interpreters of the Virgin Mary developed a Marian idea that turned into a topos in early Christian literature. The virginal gates of Mary's body are unopened by human intercourse; only the Son ("Lord, the God") has passed through it and out to the world.

Joseph's second gate is altogether different: The gates of death keep the deceased trapped. Mary has not entered through the bars herself, it seems, but has crushed the gates – or contributed to their destruction. Now the way out of Hades is open and the captives are free. Joseph thus carefully juxtaposes the gate of Hades and the gate of the Virgin, and in the final words of the third ode there is a new entrance that brings together the two: Joseph says that Mary has opened up her gate to embrace the saved ones through it. The new city which she offers can hardly be read as anything other than her own gated body "through which the Word alone has passed." It now opens up to the saved. This paradox of Marian corporeal intimacy with the saved is not uncommon in late ancient authors either, as her virginal body becomes associated with the delights of Paradise.[22]

18 Trans. (with slight modifications) and numbering follow E. Lash (from "Anastasis").

19 Joseph the Hymnographer, *Kanon of the Akathistos* 3.4.

20 For this motif in Joseph and its historical background, see Hillier 1985. A similar stanza appears in Joseph's *Kanon on St. Bucolus* (*Patrologia Graeca* 105.1057): "Gate of grace, which opened the gate of heaven for mortals, open clearly the gates of penitence for me, Lady (Δέσποινα), and free me from the gates of death (θανάτου)" (trans. from Hillier 1985, 320).

21 Ezek. 44:2.

22 See Arentzen 2017a, 46–86.

Ultimately, Mary manages to open the gates of both bodies – Hades' and her own. Immaculate and impregnable, she kills Hades, and comes to replace the prison of death with her own gated body. She herself constitutes a living paradise (5.3), Joseph assures. And the hymnographer expands on that theme by the use of other architectural metaphors:

> Hail, bridge that has truly brought over from death (θανάτου) to life all those who sing your praises.[23]

> [you are] the strength and fortress of humankind [...] place of sanctification of the glory, death of Hades (νέκρωσις ᾅδου), bridal chamber full of light.[24]

Mary does not enter into Hades in the *Kanon of the Akathistos*; she fights and replaces it. The idea that the Theotokos opened a pathway between Hades and Paradise is not restricted to Joseph, of course. A similar motif actually appears in the Frankish west around the same period. The eighth-century Benedictine Autpert Ambrose – who has recently been called the "first Mariologist of the West"[25] – hails the Virgin and says that her humility "opened Paradise and liberated the human souls from the Underworld (*ab inferis*)."[26] Those who would formerly have to expect a gloomy life among the dead can now look forward to a lustrous life in the chamber of her presence. Joseph lets the Virgin, instead of Hades, emerge as humankind's final destination and goal. Now her open doors, instead of Hades' prison gates, welcome the living.

Homily II on the Dormition by Andrew of Crete (c. 660–732)

In Joseph's kanon, Mary gives birth and Hades withdraws. If we move a century and a half back in time, we arrive in Andrew of Crete's period. Andrew was among the first great poets of the kanon genre in its ripe form, but I would like to turn to his preaching and the trilogy of Dormition homilies that survive from his hand. He probably wrote them at the end of the seventh century or around the turn of the eighth century, when he had been installed as metropolitan of

23 Joseph the Hymnographer, *Kanon of the Akathistos* 4.2.

24 Joseph the Hymnographer, *Kanon of the Akathistos* 5.2.

25 Benedict XVI 2009.

26 Autpert Ambrose, *On the Assumption* 10; my translation.

Gortyna on Crete.[27] The occasion for which he preached about the death of the Virgin must have been the Dormition festivities.[28] “Hades has no power to hold you,” Andrew exclaims to the Mother of God in the third homily, “for the forces of slavery cannot capture a royal soul.”[29] These sermons do not imagine the Virgin to substitute herself for Hades or that she conquers it. She experiences it. Quite literally she has to make her way through Hades. A power-struggle is played out between them, and she turns out to be stronger.

So, what happens when she dies – when Hades meets his bane? Andrew seems well aware that this question also excited his audience; he keeps them in suspense for quite some time. In the second homily, he suggests several times that we ought now to turn to the details of her descent, but he never ends up describing it. He gives, however, an explanation for why humans – and even someone like the Mother of God – have to go through Hades after the resurrection of Christ:

> So the souls of the saints will go through the gates of Hades (τῶν τοῦ ᾄδου πυλῶν), as we have explained, for the disciple is not above his master. [...] They shall pass through – listen carefully! – not to be destroyed, but to be examined and to be initiated there into the strange mystery of God’s plan of salvation (τὸ ξένον τῆς θείας οἰκονομίας μυστήριον): I mean the descent [of Jesus] into Hades (τὴν εἰς ᾄδου κατάβασιν) [...] In addition, souls will be taught the supernatural meaning of what he accomplished there.[30]

Apparently, Andrew imagined Hades as some mystical abode, a place that eventually everyone must enter in order to be transformed. The souls of the deceased have to pass through its lands – not to live there, but to learn the secrets of what happened there once. Although Andrew appears reluctant to give any detailed *ekphrasis* of the Underworld and the descent of the Theotokos, he does finally address the question of her death and ponder its meaning in first-person singular:

> If, as the saying goes, “there is no one who will live and not see death,” then she whose praises we sing today is clearly both human and more

27 Daley 1998, 16–17; for a brief introduction with bibliography to Andrew’s life and homilies see also Cunningham 2008, 41–3. For a recent but different introduction to Andrew of Crete and his poetry, see Krueger 2014, 130–63.

28 For the development of the feast, see e.g. Bradshaw and Johnson 2011, 206–14.

29 Andrew, *Homily III on the Dormition* 8 (*Patrologia Graeca* 97.1100); translation from Daley with slight modifications.

30 Andrew, *Homily II on the Dormition* 3 (*Patrologia Graeca* 97.1052).

> than human, since she kept the same law of nature that we must keep, yet in a way not like us but beyond us, it seems, and beyond the reason for which we are forced to suffer it. This, then, is how I suggest you understand her descent into Hades (αὐτῆς εἰς ᾅδου κατάβασιν): the period of time for which the separation of the parts (τῇ διαστάσει τῶν μερῶν) held power over her – in my judgment, at least – was only as long as was necessary for her to move, at natural speed, through unknown regions (ἀγνώστοις χωρίοις) and to come to know them first-hand, regions where she had never set foot before and which she was now crossing as in a journey through foreign, uncharted territory (ἀλλοδαπῆς καὶ ἀτριβοῦς πορείας).[31]

Andrew literally imagines Mary to be wandering through the land of Hades. Everybody must go to Hades, he says, even Christ. The preacher believes that the Virgin died, and her death did *not* simply involve an assumption into heaven. She had to go through a real death and a real *katabasis*. While her body was in the tomb, as though it was asleep – in what Andrew calls "a kind of ecstatic movement towards the things we only hope for"[32] – her soul went down into Hades. Traditionally, her soul and her body were thought to be separated for three days. Andrew seems to be indicating that these three days were just enough time for her soul to make it through the regions of the Underworld at "natural speed". In this relatively short period, she moved around in the different corners of Hades.

The Virgin did not wander like a restless spirit, however; she had a special task. But what was it? Why did she have to "know first-hand," as Andrew says, a land that she was about to leave? Did she need to know what it looked like down there and find her way through these foreign territories? Andrew has already described Hades as a place of initiation and examination for all souls. All this is a bit enigmatic, and the preacher does not give his audience unambiguous answers, but he suggests that the Virgin's mission is to go ahead of all the other faithful, to take the lead through Hades, and to show them the way through Hades to the other side. He asserts that "her role, surely, was to show us clearly the way she moved through transformation from a corruptible state to an incorruptible one."[33]

Andrew, in other words, imagined the Theotokos to guide the Christian church through the uncharted territories so they could come out on the other side. Hades appears as a mystical, perhaps labyrinthic, landscape through which the Virgin may eventually guide the dead, towards the land of the living. Andrew draws no map and gives no description of this Underworld, however,

31 Andrew, *Homily II on the Dormition* 4 (*Patrologia Graeca* 97.1053).
32 Andrew, *Homily II on the Dormition* 3 (*Patrologia Graeca* 97.1052).
33 Andrew, *Homily II on the Dormition* 4 (*Patrologia Graeca* 97.1053).

for only Mary knows the way. More than in Joseph's kanon we encounter here the topos of Mary helping the dead, for eventually she escapes the forces of the Underworld, and Hades must obey her authority. Andrew presented his congregation with a Theotokos who had become an expert on the intricacies of Hades and was able to lead the faithful through the gloomy Underworld.

On the Nativity II by Romanos the Melodist (c. 490–560)

If we move backward another one and a half centuries, we come to the time of the poet Romanos the Melodist. Romanos composed his long kontakia for use in the liturgical vigils in Constantinople.[34] In several of his dramatic texts, Hades is a personified figure who engages in dialogue with either Thanatos or Belial; he is also a notorious overeater who simply gorges on dead bodies.[35] The eighteen stanzas long kontakion *On Nativity II*, however, construes Hades as a place. "The gospel was preached also to them that are dead," Peter pledges in the first epistle of the New Testament.[36] In Romanos, it is preached by the voice of the Virgin Mother.

The reader meets Adam and Eve alienated from fertility and life; an elderly Adam complains that he has "grown old in Hades (ἐν ᾞδῃ)."[37] Down in the Underworld the primeval couple slumbers. But this is a Christmas song, so Mary and Christ are in the birth-cave in Bethlehem. The ancient world often identified a cave as the entrance to the Underworld. Orpheus, for instance, was thought to have entered Hades through a cave.[38] The rather unusual feature of Romanos' poem is this: as Mary sings to her newborn child, her voice reaches all the way down to Hades and awakens Eve. The deadly landscape of the Underworld resembles a wintry field.

> As Mary was singing praises to the one she had born,
> extolling the infant she brought forth on her own,
> she who bore children in pain heard her,
> and rejoicing Eve cried to Adam:
> – Who has now sounded in my ears what I had hoped for?
> […]
> Her voice alone has delivered me from the tribulations,

34 Lingas 1995; Grosdidier de Matons 1977, 104.

35 See e.g. Frank 2009, 220–26; Eriksen 2010/2011; Arentzen 2017b, 171–73.

36 1 Peter 4:6.

37 Romanos, *On the Nativity II* 8.5; (numbering follows Maas and Trypanis; my translation).

38 As witnessed by e.g. Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* 3.12.55. For caves as entrances to the Underworld, see the contribution by Friese in this volume.

[…]
the rod of Jesse
has sprouted forth a branch for me, that I can eat and not die
the Graced One (ἡ κεχαριτωμένη).

As you have heard the swallow [i.e. Mary] sing for me at dawn
leave your deathlike sleep, Adam, and arise!
Listen to me, your partner:
I, who long ago made bodies fall, I now rise up.[39]

There is an aspect of comedy and gender play in this vision of Hades. Eve tries, but it is not easy to convince Adam; he says he has had bad experiences with women before:

– I hear pleasant song, delightful warbling,
but now the tone of the singing does not delight me,
for it is a woman, and I fear her voice;
I have experience; hence I am afraid of the female sex;
while the sound enchants me as pleasant, the instrument rattles me.[40]

Finally, though, he shakes the weight from his eyes, lifts his head and opens his deaf ears. Eve continues insistently:

– Sniff the moisture and burst into flower at once
like an ear of grain erect, for spring has come to you;
[…]
come, follow me to Mary and touch her undefiled
feet with me now, and she will at once take pity (σπλαγχνισθήσεται).[41]

Adam replies:

– I recognize spring, woman, and I sense the delight
that we fell from long ago; and I see
a new paradise, another one, the Virgin.[42]

39 Romanos, *On the Nativity II* 3 and 4.1–4.
40 Romanos, *On the Nativity II* 5.5–9
41 Romanos, *On the Nativity II* 6.5–10. For a textual variant of the last two lines, see the apparatus in Maas and Trypanis 1963, 12.
42 Romanos, *On the Nativity II* 7.1–3.

With Eve's exhortation and Adam's recognition of Mary as a new paradise, the couple in Hades actually approaches the Virgin and prostrate themselves at her feet. Adam weeps and moans. Romanos does not tell his readers whether the encounter happens in the Underworld or in the cave – these two places seem to be located adjacent to one another – but it develops into a dialogue between Eve and Mary where Eve tells her how difficult Adam is to live with – and Romanos lets the reader understand that Adam really is unbearable.

But the Virgin approaches them with sympathy, as a mother worrying about her suffering children.[43] Her eyes are filled with tears of compassion (τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐταράττετο) when she perceives the miserable couple.[44] She has come to Eve's rescue.[45] Heroically the Virgin exclaims:

> – Cease your lamentations,
> and I will be an ambassador for you to the one who is from me,
> and you must push away the calamity as I have given birth to joy;
> for to pillage all sorrows, I have come now,
> *the Graced One*.[46]

Mary's advent in Hades marks the shift from sorrow to joy. She performs what one might call a vocal *katabasis* and proclaims salvation. While in Andrew's homily the *katabasis* of the Theotokos at her death mimicked that of her son, in Romanos the *katabasis* of her voice prefigures that of the son.

Here, in this version – more than in Andrew's and Joseph's – Mary decides to intercede on behalf of humankind in Hades in a manner which almost resembles her behavior in the apocalypses cited in the introduction. The difference is that in Romanos there is no frightening divine judge that she has to convince. She simply discusses Adam and Eve's case with her son (in the manger!) He will release them soon, he says, but Mary may go and tell them that they must wait a *little* longer. Of course, three decades is not a long time when you have already spent millennia in the Underworld. The presence of Mary's voice in Hades represents the beginning of new life and instigates their renewal.

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43 Romanos, *On the Nativity* II 10.

44 Romanos, *On the Nativity* II 10.5.

45 Romanos, *On the Nativity* II 12.1–2.

46 Romanos, *On the Nativity* II 10.7–11.

Memra on the Burial of the Mother of God by Jacob of Serug (c. 451–521)

The fourth and earliest writer in this roundtrip to Mary's Hades is a Syriac one. Jacob of Serug was an older contemporary of Romanos. He received his education at the school of Edessa; eventually he became a bishop in Batnan (modern-day Suruç). According to the manuscript, the hundred and ten verses long *memra* or verse-homily *On the Burial of the Mother of God* was first delivered at a church council in Nisibis in the year 489:[47]

> The 81st festal homily of St Mar Jacob, concerning the burial, that is, the departure, of the holy Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, and how she was buried by the apostles, which was spoken by him when there was an enquiry about it at the synod, while it was meeting in the church of St Mar Cyriacus the Martyr in the city of Nisibis, on the fourth day of the week, on the fourteenth of the month Ab [August].[48]

As is clear from the title of the homily, we now leave the world of Bethlehem and return to Mary's Dormition. Jacob's version is one of the earliest witnesses to a Dormition tradition. Like Andrew later, the Syrian bishop emphasized that everyone has to die, even the Mother of Jesus.

In Jacob's vision, Mary's death becomes a cosmic event. Her body is placed in a cave and all of God's creation comes to celebrate:[49]

> the air was utterly sanctified with sweet fragrance.
> New sounds were heard from all the birds,
> which were chanting in ranks according to their natures.
> All living creatures made a joyful sound of praise in their places;
> all the earth was stirred by their shouts of joy.[50]

The created world is in a state of euphoria; delightful sounds and pleasant smells fill the air. But Jacob goes further than this; not only does he imagine all kinds of living creatures to rejoice, but the world of the dead is also involved. The whole cosmos of both living and dead gather around: "The assembly on

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47 For a general introduction to this memra, see Hurst 1990.

48 Trans. Shoemaker 2003, 408.

49 Jacob, *Homily on the Burial* 715; trans. Hansbury with slight modifications; numbers refer to the page in Bedjan's edition.

50 Jacob, *Homily on the Burial* 716.

high and that below cried out with one hymn."[51] The apostles are present and prepare her body, and the angels all arrive. The "demons […] and the hosts of darkness," on the other hand, flee from the scene, and afflicted souls are relieved.[52] In Romanos we saw how the Virgin's voice transgressed the borders between this world and the Underworld in the birth cave. In Jacob, it is as if there exist – in the moment of her burial in the cave – no borders at all. Even the deceased take part in the celebrations and are visited by Mary:

> On this day Adam rejoices and Eve his wife,
> because their daughter dwells in the place where they are gathered.
> On this day the righteous Noah and Abraham rejoice
> that their daughter has visited them in their dwelling-place.
> On this day Jacob, the honourable old man, rejoices
> that the daughter who sprouted from his root has called him to life.
> […]
> On this day let Samuel rejoice with Jeremiah,
> because the daughter of Judah dropped dew on their bones.
> […]
> On this day let also Isaiah the prophet rejoice,
> because she whom he prophesied, behold she visits him in the place of the dead.
> On this day all the prophets lifted their heads from their graves,
> because they saw the light which shone forth on them.
> They saw that death is disquieted and flees from within them;
> and that the gates of heaven are opened again and the depths of the earth.
> The prophets, the apostles, the martyrs and the priests who
> were gathered together, also the teachers and the patriarchs and the righteous ones of old.
> In heaven, the Watchers; in the depth, man; in the air, glory:
> when the Virgin Mary was buried as one deceased.
> […]
> The air dropped living rain on the bones
> of the sons of the Church.[53]

51 Jacob, *Homily on the Burial* 718.
52 Jacob, *Homily on the Burial* 715–16.
53 Jacob, *Homily on the Burial* 716–19.

Mary visits the place where the dead forefathers dwell. She does not arrive as a wanderer in the landscape of Hades as in Andrew; she emerges rather as a holy presence and an invigorating force among the dead. They seem to wake from their sleep, and they lift their slumbering heads. She causes living rain and dew to fall on their dead bones. They are, in other words, about to regenerate.

As we have already seen, such texts occasionally attract dedicated Christological interpreters, and Thomas Hurts, for instance, finds that the "linking of poetic structure with theological insight only underlines the fundamental Christocentric perspective" of this memra.[54] I do not find this entirely convincing. The Marian imagery here is itself astonishing: according to New Testament chronology, Mary's death necessarily takes place after Christ's resurrection. Nonetheless, Jacob places the dead still in their graves when the Virgin arrives. Perhaps they are waiting for her? Whatever her son has started, the mother seems to complete as she fulfills the longings of the dead. She brings them joy and light. Like Romanos, Jacob entertains the notion that the work of freeing humans from Hades is carried out by the Mother and the Son in cooperation.

Descending into Hades, Mary breaks down the natural borders of the world. As a token of life she dwells among the dead, and hence she disquiets and dispels death itself and calls the dead back to life; she provides open gates to both earth and heaven, and there is glory in the air.

Nearing the End

By resisting the impulse to read the Virgin Mary Christocentricly, we may discover new motifs. The four examples that I have discussed represent the timespan between the fifth and the ninth centuries. They also represent the linguistic realms of both Greek and Syriac, and they exemplify different genres and festive occasions. The *Kanon on the Akathistos* stages the relationship between Mary and Hades in an incarnation and Annunciation context and thus shows her as an agent in the battle with the forces of death. Romanos clearly makes a Christmas connection between the Virgin and Hades, highlighting her powers as a Mother of the Christ Child. Both Jacob and Andrew explore her transfer from the land of the living, via the realm of the dead, to the realm of God. Stephen Shoemaker has pointed out that "the early Dormition traditions agree rather remarkably on Mary's final location after her death: almost without exception they conclude with Mary's transfer in body and/or soul to the Garden of Paradise."[55]

54 Hurst 1990, 99.

55 Shoemaker 2006, 86.

In the narratives discussed in this article, the association between the Virgin and Paradise persist. It is worth noting, however, that these authors do not feel a need to assert that Mary ends up in Paradise; they suggest rather that Mary opens up Paradise for the world – or she simply comes to replace Paradise as she herself turns into the corporeal locus of salvation. In relation to Hades a similar picture emerges: the question is not whether she ends up there – hardly any Christian author of the Byzantine period would hold that Mary finds her final resting place in Hades – but the question is what she does to Hades and how she relates to the dead there. The four examples show us a Mary who defeats Hades and substitutes its form with her own body; she discovers Hades' hidden topography and guides the dead through its regions; she preaches – and even constitutes – joy and resurrection among its inhabitants. In a word, she furnishes the dead with open channels from Hades to the heights of Paradise. All the examples underscore her life-giving powers. As opposed to the later apocalypses, neither of these homilies and hymns portrays Hades as some sort of penal hell, and they do not seem to imagine that Hades has any power after Mary has intervened. None of them renders the Virgin as an antagonistic voice vis-à-vis God. Hence they play out a different sort of interaction between Hades and Mary, where she, in alignment with her son, confronts the Hadean forces.

These compositions were written by a Sicilian monk in Constantinople during the Iconoclasm, a bishop in Crete who grew up in the Caliphate, a Greek Syrian in Constantinople before the emergence of Iconoclasm and Islam, and a Syrian bishop in the middle of the Chalcedon conflicts. As such they are not useful for tracing a straight line of development, but they do reveal that the Virgin-in-Hades motif resurfaced in a great variety of Christian contexts. What the texts have in common is that they have all been performed in the middle of an ecclesiatical assembly, in an important Christian center. In all these various settings, the Byzantine Theotokos was a woman who related to, challenged, and eventually overcame or neutralized Hades.

This study is in no way exhaustive; it is more than likely that there are other hymns or homilies between the fifth and the ninth century that somehow connect the Virgin and Hades. By engaging texts written by towering figures of the period, however, I have indicated that the motif, despite its miscellaneous forms, is the opposite of a marginal phenomenon. Apocalypses like the ones treated by Baun can always be disparaged as popular tales, as products of an unpleasant, eccentric, and unsophisticated imagination – although we do not know who composed them and for whom. Liturgical texts, on the other hand, were performed publicly in the ecclesiastical assemblies; they give us glimpses of official policies and commonly held views. Various

writers in numerous centers were convinced that Mary had something crucial to do with the downfall of Hades; not only narratives of Christ's birth, and the Virgin's causal parturition, tell of her impact. Byzantines – whether they be speakers of Greek or Syriac – imagined that Hades found his nemesis in the Theotokos. The weakening of Hades emerged directly from Marian actions, and the liturgical authors subjugated the landscape of decay to the vivifying body of the Virgin.

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CHAPTER 15

Why did Hades Become Beautiful in Byzantine Art?

Henry Maguire

Our enquiry begins with a comparison of two versions of the *Anastasis*, or, to give it its English name, the Harrowing of Hell, when Christ descended to Hades after his Crucifixion and rescued Adam and Eve, and with them the rest of humanity, from the clutches of death. One version is a painting in an eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon manuscript, the Tiberius Psalter, where we see Hell portrayed as the open jaws of a gigantic horned beast (*Figure 15.1*).[1] At the lower left, beneath the feet of Christ, appears the bound figure of Satan, who has bestial features, a long snout and fangs, and long claws growing from the ends of his fingers. The characterizations of Hell and the devil in this manuscript have many parallels in other works of Western medieval art.[2] The second version of the *Anastasis* is a late eleventh or early twelfth-century Byzantine mosaic in the church at Daphni, in Greece (*Figure 15.2*).[3] Here, in contrast to the Western painting, Hell, or Hades, appears as a naked man with a human head, whom Christ tramples under his feet. There is little that is deformed, grotesque, or bestial about the Byzantine personification of Hades – on the contrary, he has a beautiful and well-formed human body. Only the pained expression of his face betrays his utter defeat by the power of Christ. This portrayal of Hell is not a deformed monster, rather he evokes the ancient god Hades, with his disheveled hair and beard. He resembles the image of Hades seen in Classical works of art, such as a third-century Roman floor mosaic of the god abducting Persephone, which is in a pagan mausoleum under St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican.[4]

This, then, is our question: why was the personification of Hell humanized and comparatively beautiful in the Byzantine *Anastasis*? Why did not the medieval Byzantine artist make him bestial and ugly, as the Western medieval

1 London, British Library, Tiberius C.VI, f. 14r. On the iconographic type, see Haney 1986, 118–19.
2 See for example the miniatures in the 12th–c. Winchester Psalter, London, British Library, Cotton Nero C.IV, f. 24 (Haney 1986, 118–19, figure 23) and the Winchester Bible (Oakeshott 1945, pl. XXII).
3 Diez and Demus 1931, 69–72, figures. 100 and 102.
4 Mausoleum I; Zander 1995, 47–48, figure 112.

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FIGURE 15.1 *Tiberius Psalter, London, British Library, Tiberius C.VI, f. 14r. The Harrowing of Hell.*
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painters and sculptors did? Was it merely a lingering reverence for antique art, or were there other forces at play?[5]

Personifications of Hades in Byzantine Art

To answer the question, it is necessary first to briefly review the personification of Hades in Byzantine art – for he was by no means always beautiful.

5 Weitzmann 1971a, 210–11, figs. 194–95, and Weitzmann 1971b, 267, posited the ancient iconographic type of Herakles dragging Kerberos out of the Underworld as a source for middle Byzantine portrayals of the Anastasis.



FIGURE 15.2 *Daphni, mosaic. The Anastasis.*
SOURCE: AUTHOR.

Then an attempt can be made to explore the rationale that lay behind the images. Our survey begins with a small group of Byzantine Psalters that date to the ninth century. Some of the marginal miniatures of these manuscripts characterize Hades as a grossly fat giant in order to convey the idea of his huge appetite for the souls of the dead. The immediate source of this visualization was a tradition in Byzantine texts, going back to the fourth century, which described Hades as insatiable and all devouring.[6] Its ultimate source, however, was the Old Testament; in Isaiah, for example, we read that "Hades has enlarged itself and opened its mouth without measure."[7] Thus, in a painting of the ninth-century Chludov Psalter in Moscow, which illustrates Psalm 2, we see a grotesquely obese naked giant sitting on the ground as he draws the naked souls toward him – the inscription at the side identifies his victims as "the sinners in Hades."[8] As Emma Maayan-Fanar has pointed out, this portrayal of Hades as solid and fleshly clearly distinguishes him from Satan, whom the Byzantines conceived of as being dark, shadowy, and insubstantial.[9]

6 Eastmond and James 2007, 179–80.
7 Isaiah 5:14.
8 Moscow, Historical Museum, MS. add. gr. 129, f. 8v.
9 Eastmond and James 2007, 179; Maayan-Fanar 2006, 94–96, figure 1.



FIGURE 15.3 *Naples, Museo Nazionale, sarcophagus fragment. Odysseus with the Cyclops Polyphemos.*
SOURCE: GERMAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE, ROME, NO. 63.636. PHOTO: KOPPERMANN.

The corpulent Hades of the ninth-century marginal Psalters has been associated with Byzantine folklore,[10] but it is also possible that the inspiration was ancient portrayals of the giant cyclops Polyphemos, who ate the companions of Odysseus. In Roman art, such as a fragment of a sarcophagus in the Museo Nazionale of Naples, the giant Polyphemos is shown with a distended belly, with bunched hair, a large moustache, and a thick round beard, like the Hades of the miniatures (*Figure 15.3*).[11] On the sarcophagus, the cyclops rests his foot on one of his disemboweled victims, while Odysseus, on the left, brings him a cup of wine.

10 Kartsonis 1986, 140.
11 Mango 1963, 68, figure 4.

A twelfth-century Byzantine writer, Constantine Manasses, wrote an *ekphrasis*, or formal description, of an ancient stone sculpture of Polyphemos that must have been similar to the carving in Naples.[12] This *ekphrasis* has recently been discussed in an article by Ingela Nilsson.[13] Constantine Manasses described the obese giant as:

> wild and well fed […] with a gigantic body, fearsome to behold, and more like a beast and a wooded mountain than a civilized bread-eating man. His hair was thick and squalid, his teeth were many, and his brows were terrible to behold […]. The hairs of his beard were twisted […] his neck was thick, his shoulders broad, and his mouth gaping wide open, so as to gulp down whole herds of animals […]. One could see his stomach distended and full of meat, heavy with its load of food […].[14]

This description by a Byzantine writer has much in common with the characterization of Hades in the Chludov Psalter, where we have a kind of grossly distended Polyphemos, who devours the souls of the dead. The choice of such a model for Hades would have been natural in view of the Byzantine understanding of Hades as all consuming.

A different visualization of Hades can be found in a miniature accompanying Psalm 67 in the same manuscript, which shows him as a man lying prostrate on the ground.[15] On his lower body stand his formerly captive souls, reaching up to Christ who appears in a *mandorla* above. The head of Hades is shown in profile as a grotesque caricature with an open mouth, a long protruding tongue, long streaming hair, and a deformed cranium. In this miniature his body is colored a dark blue, a feature that suggests that here Hades is conflated with the devil. Both in Western medieval and in Byzantine art and writing a shadowy, dark, black or blue appearance was associated with demons.[16]

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12 Sternbach 1902, cols. 83–85.

13 Nilsson 2011, 123–36.

14 Constantine Manasses, *Description of the Cyclops* (Sternbach 1902, col. 84): Γέγραπτο δὲ ὁ κύκλωψ <εὐ>τροφός τις καὶ ἄγριος […] τὸ σῶμα πελώριος, ἰδεῖν φοβερός, εἰς θῆρα μ<ᾶλλον> καὶ ὄρος κατάφυτον ἐξισούμενος ἢ ἄνθρωπον σιτοφάγον καὶ ἥμερον, δασὺς τὴν κόμην, αὐχμῶν τὴν κόμην, πο<λὺς> τὰς γνάθους, δεινὸς τὰς ὀφρῦς […] αἱ τοῦ πώγωνος τρίχες ἐβοστρυχοῦντο […] εὐπαγὴς ὁ αὐχήν, οἱ ὦμοι εὐρεῖς τὸ στόμα εὐρυχανδὲς καὶ τοσοῦτον, οἷον καὶ ὅλας ἀγέλας θρεμμάτων καταπιεῖν […]. ἦν ἰδεῖν […] καὶ γαστέρα πεφυσσημένην καὶ βορᾶς πεπλησμένην καὶ βαρουμένην φόρ<τῳ> τροφῆς.

15 Moscow, Historical Museum, MS. add. gr. 129, f. 63v.; Maayan-Fanar 2006, 99–100, figs. 7–8.

16 Maayan-Fanar 2006, 101; Hatzaki 2009, 35.

As Anna Kartsonis has shown, an apparent conflation of Hades with Satan also occurs in literature.[17] Whereas the *Gospel of Nicodemus* differentiates between Hades and Satan by describing the two characters as being in dialogue with each other, a homily by Pseudo-Epiphanius refers only to a single "tyrant" in the Underworld, who is described with images appropriate to the devil, such as a trampled snake or a bitter dragon.[18]

In the tenth century we begin to find a new visualization of Hades, which occurs primarily in depictions of the *Anastasis*. It is exemplified by an ivory in the Hermitage Museum, where the carver has given to Hades more normal human proportions and appearance.[19] Here, though Hades is thick set, he is not obese. His lips are slightly parted, but his teeth are not bared. There is nothing grotesque about his portrayal, if one excepts the slight dishevelment of his hair. The only connection with Satan is the presence of fetters around his wrists and his ankles, for, according to the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, Satan was chained and imprisoned in Hades at Christ's Resurrection.[20]

In Byzantine art from the tenth century onwards we find a division between the ways that Hades is portrayed in the *Anastasis* and in other contexts, such as the Raising of Lazarus or the Last Judgment. In the *Anastasis* the monstrous aspects of Hades are diminished, and his association with Satan is muted. By contrast, in the Raising of Lazarus and in the Last Judgment he appears more bestial and satanic. A very unusual portrayal of the Raising of Lazarus occurs in the Barberini Psalter, which was produced in Constantinople towards the end of the eleventh century.[21] In this miniature, Hades appears as a giant beneath the scene of Christ bringing the dead man to life. The soul of Lazarus is seen escaping on a ray of light that leads from the giant to Christ. Hades grasps his broad stomach with his arms, as if the act of vomiting forth one of his souls has left him with a belly-ache. He also has a beast-like head, resembling that of a dog. This is the only example known to me of a Byzantine artist representing Hades with a human body and the head of an animal, although, as we have seen, hybrid representations of this kind were common in Western portrayals of Hell.

17 Kartsonis 1986, 74.

18 *Patrologia Graeca* 43, cols 452C, 456A–B.

19 Evans and Wixom 1997, 147–48, no. 93.

20 Maayan-Fanar 2006, 97. On the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, see also the contribution by Ainalis in this volume.

21 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS. 372, f. 48r.; Maayan-Fanar 2006, 97, figure 4; Eastmond and James 2007, 182, figure 16.5. On the representation of Lazarus in Byzantine literature of the twelfth century, see the contribution by Nilsson in this volume.



FIGURE 15.4 *Torcello Cathedral, mosaic on west wall. Last Judgment.*
SOURCE: ALINARI/ART RESOURCE, NY.

Besides the Anastasis, the most common context in which to find portrayals of Hades in post-iconoclastic Byzantine art was the Last Judgment, where he was shown presiding over the fiery torments of the damned. For example, in the great mosaic on the west wall of the Cathedral of Torcello, whose iconography is Byzantine, Hades appears in the lower right area of the composition as a naked man with shaggy white hair contrasting with the deep blue color of his skin (*Figure 15.4*).[22] There is a hint of hybridity in the beast-like claws of his toes. His two eyes, looking to the left and right respectively, give him a wild look. This portrait of Hades corresponds well with the description of the devil in the tenth-century life of Saint Andrew the Fool as "having savage eyes and striking terror mixed with disgust into anyone who looked at him."[23] It also corresponds with Manasses' description of the bestial features of Polyphemos, with his wild hair and claws. The fearsome appearance of the Hades at Torcello, together with his

22 Andreescu 1972, 183–223, figure 15.

23 Rydén 1995, vol. 2, 114: ἀπηγριωμένος ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς και τρόμον ἐξ ἀηδίας τῳ θεωροῦντι καθεισπραττόμενος.

pronounced blue coloration, definitely associate him with Satan. Hades is also given a dark color in depictions of the Last Judgment in manuscripts and panel paintings. This can be seen, for example, in a mid-twelfth-century icon at Mount Sinai, where the color of Hades' skin is black rather than blue.[24] As at Torcello, this satanic Hades can be seen on the right side of the composition, among the figures of the damned. Part of his figure has been lost, but the black color of his legs is still visible.

In contrast to his appearance in the Last Judgment, the characterization of Hades in tenth- to twelfth-century portayals of the *Anastasis* is distinctly toned down. Though his skin color is sometimes somewhat darker than that of other actors in the screen, he is not usually shown as completely blue or black.[25] In many cases there is little apparent distinction in coloration between Hades and the other figures, as can be seen in the early twelfth-century mosaic at Daphni, where his complexion is largely white (*Figure 15.2*). Only the bluish tints of the shading in his stomach and hair hint at his satanic nature. At Daphni the voracious appetite of Hades is referred to very discretely, by the glimpse of two teeth in his slightly opened mouth. His disheveled hair expresses his wildness, and his contracted brows express the agony of defeat, but he is not given the claws of a beast. Here his association with Satan is primarily conveyed by the chains binding his hands and feet, rather than by his physiognomic characteristics.

The Problem of Hades in Images of the *Anastasis*

It is now time to turn to the rationale that governed these images. The first point to be made is that in all of the Byzantine portrayals Hades was shown naked, or naked except for a loincloth. A reason for this can be found in the sixth century hymns of Romanos the Melodos, who evoked the privation of

24 Velmans 2002, 206, pl. 177. See also the painting of the Last Judgment in the 11th-c. Gospel Book in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, gr. 74, f. 51v., where also Hades is given a dark coloration: Omont 1908, vol. 1, f. 51v.; Angheben 2002, 106, figure 1.

25 Thus, for example, in the miniature of the Anastasis in the 10th-c. Lectionary in the Russian National Library, St; Petersburg, MS. gr. 21, f. 1v., the body of Hades is colored white with dark brown shading (Kartsonis 1986, figure 62); in the fresco of the Old Church at Tokalı Kilise his flesh is appears somewhat darker than that of Christ (Epstein 1986, figs. 37, 40); while in the fresco of the church of St. Barbara at Soğanlı his body is modeled in a light and dark brown color, but is not completely blue or black (Restle 1967, vol. 3, figure 440).

Hades because he had been stripped of everything by Christ.[26] The nakedness is all the more apparent in images of the *Anastasis*, such as that at Daphni, where the pale body of Hades contrasts with the magnificent gold garments of the victorious Christ (*Figure 15.2*). But there remains the question of why Hades was portrayed as relatively beautiful in Byzantine icons of the *Anastasis*, with his gluttonous and diabolical character played down, in contrast to his more monstrous appearance in other contexts such as the marginal Psalters and the Last Judgment, not to mention the frightening hybrids imagined by Western artists.

An answer to this question may be sought in the nature of the canonical image of the *Anastasis*, which was central to Byzantine worship, but was also inherently problematic. The *Anastasis* was a preeminent example of the type of image that could cause unease to the Byzantine viewer, since, along with Christ and his prophets, it gave prominence to an unholy figure, that of Hades. There is an interesting passage in an early ninth-century treatise against the iconoclasts by the Patriarch Nikephoros, which highlights the difficulties for a Byzantine viewer. Nikephoros wrote that the iconoclasts had a special objection to depictions of the *Anastasis*. Quoting the arguments of an imagined iconoclast opponent, Nikephoros wrote:

> With the icons of Christ it is necessary to depict at the same time abominations and other evils that we should shun, such as Hell being trampled underfoot at the Anastasis, the devil being made impotent and overthrown, and other things of this kind. We inadvertently prostrate ourselves before all these at the same time.[27]

In other words, the iconoclast objects that in the traditional image of the *Anastasis*, both Christ and Hades, whom he identifies explicitly as the devil, are exposed to the veneration of the viewer. Nikephoros rejects these arguments by saying that evil is shown in the *Anastasis* as trampled under foot, and without the least honor. Nevertheless, the iconoclast touched on a real

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26 Romanos the Melodos, *Lazarus* II, 10; *Resurrection* IV, 18, 20, 30; Grosdidier de Matons 1964–81, vol. 3, 210, vol. 4, 522, 524, 536. On the representation of Hades in Romanos the Melodos and other hymnographers, see the contribution by Arentzen in this volume.

27 Nikephoros, *Antirrheticus* III, 37 (*Patrologia Graeca* 100, col. 436): Ἀλλὰ ταῖς εἰκόσι Χριστοῦ, φασὶ, καὶ ἕτερά τινα τῶν βδελυκτῶν καὶ ἀπηγορευμένων συνδιαγράφεται, οἶον ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως ὁ ᾅδης πατούμενος, καὶ διάβολος καταργούμενος καὶ καταβαλλόμενος, καὶ εἴ τι τούτοις προσέοικε. Λανθανόντως δὲ καὶ ταῦτα συμπροσκυνεῖται. Trans. Mondzain 1989, 228. See also Kartsonis 1986, 139.

fear, namely that the honor paid to Christ in the image might also pass to Hades.[28]

The difficulty in portraying Hades was more acute in the case of the *Anastasis* than in other contexts. As one of the major feast icons, the *Anastasis* was endlessly repeated in wall paintings, mosaics, and panel paintings. On the other hand, the inventive depictions of Hades in the marginal Psalters were hidden away, where relatively few eyes could see them. Moreover, in the Last Judgment, as we have seen, Hades usually occupies a relatively insignificant location to one side of a composition crowded with figures (*Figure 15.4*), whereas in the *Anastasis* his appearance is central.

The problem was compounded by the fact that the Byzantines associated the defeat of Hades at the *Anastasis* with the overthrow of idols. The Chludov Psalter provides an illustration of this association. On the page opposite the painting of Hades yielding up his souls to Christ, discussed above, there is another miniature that depicts the prophecy of Daniel about Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the idol made of gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay.[29] In the king's dream, this idol was shattered by the stone that had been cut out of a mountain without hands. In the painting, which is now much abraded, we see the rock falling from the mountain and the broken remains of the idol below. In Byzantine thought, the rock was associated with Christ, who came miraculously from the womb of the Virgin and who crushed simultaneously the palaces of Hell and the temples of the idols.[30] For example, in a homily on the Birth of the Virgin, the ninth-century patriarch Photios followed a denunciation of pagan myths with the following exegesis:

> From the barren and fruitless womb comes forth the holy mountain, from which has been cut without hands a precious cornerstone, Christ our God, who has crushed the temples of the demons and the palaces of Hell together with their domination.[31]

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28 When I discussed this text with a colleague from Cyprus, she told me of an incident in her childhood, when she was required to kiss an icon of St. George on horseback killing the dragon. The problem was that, as a child, she could not stand high enough to kiss St. George; she could only reach the dragon. So she made the veneration with extreme reluctance.

29 Moscow, Historical Museum, MS. add. gr. 129, f. 64r.

30 Corrigan 1992, 37–40, figure 50; Maayan-Fanar 2006, 100, figure 8

31 Photios, *Homily IX*, *The Birth of the Virgin* 10 (*Patrologia Graeca* 102, col. 561): Τὸ ὄρος τὸ ἅγιον, ἐκ τῆς ἐρήμου καὶ ἀγόνου μήτρας προέρχεται, ἐξ οὗ τμηθεὶς ἄνευ χειρῶν λίθος ἔντιμος ἀκρογωνιαῖος Χριστὸς ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν, τὰ τῶν δαιμόνων τεμένη, καὶ τὰ τοῦ ᾅδου βασίλεια, αὐτῇ τυραννίδι συνέτριψεν. Trans. Mango 1958, 175.

In the miniatures of the Chludov Psalter the meaning of the dream is indicated by the depiction of the Virgin and Child in a *clypeus* above the mountain, and by the juxtaposition with the broken figure of Hades giving up his souls on the facing page.

A similar association of the stone falling from the mountain and the destruction of idols occurs in a sermon on the Presentation of the Virgin by the eighth-century Patriarch Germanos:

> Hail, O most rich and shady mountain from God, in which was raised up the reasoning lamb bearing our sins and afflictions; from which the stone cut without hands was rolled, and crushed idolatrous altars [...].[32]

In the *Anastasis*, therefore, Hades could be seen not only as Satan, but also as a pagan idol, an identity which rendered his image all the more problematic in the context of Christian worship.

To solve the dilemma of portraying Hades in the *Anastasis*, Byzantine artists could have resorted to three options. The first option would have been to denigrate Hades by reducing his size vis-à-vis that of Christ. This was, effectively, the solution that they employed in representing another major feast scene, the Baptism. In early Christian representations of this episode, the Jordan was portrayed in the same manner as a pagan river god, as we can see in the late fifth or early sixth-century mosaic in the dome of the Arian baptistery in Ravenna (*Figure 15.5*).[33] Although the river raises his right hand to acknowledge the lordship of Christ, he is an imposing presence, almost dominating the more slender smaller figure of his master beside him. After iconoclasm, however, artists downgraded the figure of Jordan, with his pagan associations, reducing him drastically in scale, as can be seen in the damaged mosaic of the Baptism at Daphni, or in the better preserved mosaic in the somewhat earlier church of Hosios Loukas (*Figure 15.6*).[34] The reduction in size of the old god greatly reduced the danger of veneration. But Byzantine artists did not adopt the same strategy in the case of Hades in icons of the Anastasis. At Daphni he is almost on the same scale as Christ (*Figure 15.2*). One reason for this equivalence must

32 *Homily on the Presentation of the Virgin* (*Patrologia Graeca* 98, col. 308): Germanos, Χαίροις, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ πιότατον καὶ κατάσκιον ὄρος, ἐν ᾧ ὁ λογικὸς ἀμνὸς ἐκτραφεὶς τὰς ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίας καὶ τὰς νόσους ἐβάστασεν, ἐξ οὗ ὁ ἀχειρότμητος λίθος κυλισθεὶς, βωμοὺς εἰδωλικοὺς συνέθλασεν. See Corrigan 1992, 39.

33 Deichmann 1958, pls. 251–4; Deichmann 1969–1989, vol. 1, 209–12; vol. 2, part 1, 254–55.

34 Diez and Demus 1931, 57–60, pl. XI, figure 6.



FIGURE 15.5 *Ravenna, Arian Baptistery, dome mosaic. The Baptism with the River Jordan.* SOURCE: AUTHOR.

be that diminishing the size of Hades would also diminish the scale and significance of Christ's triumph; Christ had to be given a credible adversary.

A second strategy to avoid the problem of potential veneration was to show Hades from the back, as can be seen on a twelfth-century ivory now in Berlin (*Figure 15.7*).[35] Here the face of Hades is no longer visible; we only see his long flowing hair together with his hands tied behind his back. But this iconography was extremely rare, probably because, like diminishing the magnitude of Hades, it was too much of a denigration of Christ's opponent. It was necessary to see the suffering on the face of Hades in order to savor the fruits of Christ's victory.

The third option for presenting Hades to the Byzantine viewer in a more acceptable way was to play down the aspects of the image of Hades that were seen as problematic, particularly his association with Satan and his identification with idols. For this reason, in icons of the *Anastasis* Hades was not colored too emphatically in the manner of demons, in blue or black. Nor did he appear as a hybrid creature, incorporating bestial features, because in the eyes of the

35 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, no. 343; Goldschmidt and Weitzmann 1930–1934, vol. 2, no. 217, pl. 70.

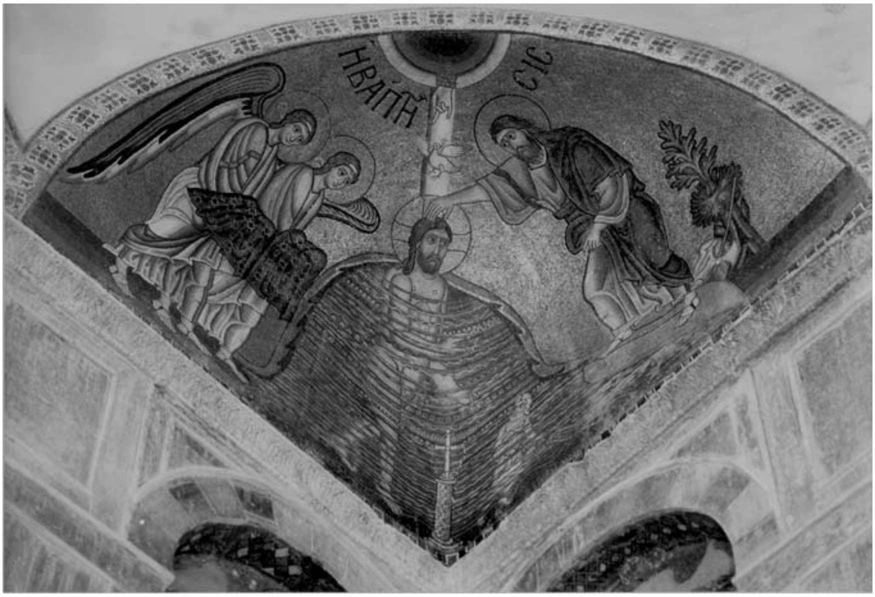


FIGURE 15.6 *Hosios Loukas, Katholikon, mosaic. The Baptism with the River Jordan.* SOURCE: JOSEPHINE POWELL PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, FINE ARTS LIBRARY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

Byzantines figures that combined human and animal elements had a special association with pagan idols. In another part of his treatise against the iconoclasts, Nikephoros characterized idols as incongruous inventions like: “the shapes that the pagans fatuously and irreligiously invent, such as of tritons, centaurs, and other phantoms.”[36] Nikephoros defines idols as hybrids, what another Byzantine author, writing in the tenth century, called ludicrous combinations of “different natures and faculties.”[37]

In their portrayals of the *Anastasis*, therefore, Byzantine artists after the ninth century did not wish to make the body of Hades resemble the Byzantine idea of the pagan idol – that is, an animal hybrid. Nor did they turn him into a huge obese monster like Polyphemos, whose representation in stone was described by Constantine Manasses as an “idol.”[38] Instead,

36 Nikephoros, *Antirrheticus* I, 29 (*Patrologia Graeca* 100, col. 277): Τὸ δὲ εἴδωλον ἀνυπάρκτον τινῶν καὶ ἀνυποστάτων ἀνάπλασμα, ὁποίας δή τινας Ἕλληνες ὑπ᾽ ἀσυνεσία καὶ ἀθεΐας, Τριτώνων τινῶν καὶ Κενταύρων καὶ ἄλλων φασμάτων οὐχ ὑφεστώτων μορφὰς ἀναπλάττουσι.

37 Antony of St. Sophia, *Encomium of St. Alypios*; Halkin 1963, 189–91 (describing a sculpture of the god Pan).

38 Sternbach 1902, col. 85.



FIGURE 15.7 *Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst. Ivory of the Anastasis.*
SOURCE: STAATLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN, SKULPTURENSAMMLUNG UND MUSEUM FÜR BYZANTINISCHE KUNST, JÖRG P. ANDERS, 1977.

the Byzantines showed Hades more discretely, with a normal human shape, but plainly conquered by Christ, with his naked body trampled underfoot and his face exhibiting the emotions of pain and defeat. In creating icons of the *Anastasis*, Byzantine artists had to compromise; on the one hand they needed a credible adversary for Christ, whose visible anguish in defeat could counteract the mortal onlooker's anguish at death; on the other hand, they had to diminish the difficulties inherent in portraying Hades by de-emphasizing the characteristics that would identify him with Satan and with idols.

Conclusion: Byzantium and the West

In conclusion, it is appropriate to return briefly to the Western examples of the Harrowing of Hell, and ask why it was that Western artists were not subject to the same concerns and scruples as their Byzantine counterparts when it came to depicting the body of Hades. Why did they show him with such relish as a monster? The answer to this question may lie in the Byzantine attitudes toward images, which differed from those in the west. The Byzantines believed that icons of Christ and of the saints gave a special access to their prototypes. The viewer contacted the holy person through his or her image, and the holy person responded to the viewer through the image. Thus the icon was an opening into the world of the spirit. For this reason, the Byzantines developed a system of schematic portraits that enabled each of the major saints and prophets to be identified in their images, which were held to be true likenesses.[39] For example, if one were to take the Old Testament kings rising from their graves on the left of the *Anastasis* at Daphni (*Figure 15.2*), each corresponds to his normal portrait type in Byzantine art: David has a short white beard, while Solomon is beardless. Even without reading the inscription attached to an image, the venerator of an icon would know exactly to whom he or she was talking.

In the West, on the other hand, portrait images functioned more as symbols of the spiritual world than as windows opening into it. Western artists did not develop consistent portrait types for most of the saints, since there was no need for them. In the West, images of the saints were considered to be not so much true likenesses providing a privileged means of access to the holy persons, but rather conventional signs that had no direct link to the spiritual.

The difficulty with the Byzantine understanding of images was that it could apply as much to pagan idols, and to depictions of the devil, as it did to portrayals of Christ and his saints. If an icon of Christ gave direct access to Christ, could not this also be true of an image of a river God, or of Satan, or of Hades? In the West this problem was less important, because, in general, all images, whether sacred or profane, were held to be signs, without direct connection to their prototypes. Ostensibly, the role of Christian images was not to be worshipped, but only to remind and to instruct.[40] This Western position was laid out already in the late eighth century in the *Libri Carolini*, the Carolingian

39 Maguire 1996, 5–99.

40 Maguire 2012, 103–5.

response to the Second Council of Nicaea, which had approved the veneration of icons. In the words of the *Libri Carolini*: "We reject nothing except the adoration of images [...] and permit images in churches not for adoration, but as reminders of the deeds of salvation and as decoration for the walls." But, the author adds, "the Greeks worship walls and painted panels and so consider themselves to have a great benefit of faith in that they are at the mercy of painters."[41]

It was this state of being "at the mercy of painters" that caused the Byzantines difficulties with viewing the *Anastasis*. The invention of Byzantine artists was constrained by the connection of images with their prototypes, which implicated all images in the possibility of veneration, whether holy or unholy. The artist had to negotiate a way around potentially difficult subjects, such as Hades. For Western artists, on the other hand, the problem was less acute; the shadow of adoration was cast less strongly, leaving them free to portray Hell in any context in any way that they liked.

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41 *Libri Carolini* 3.16 (Freeman 1998, 411): *Nam dum nos nihil in imaginibus spernamus praeter adorationem, quippe qui in basilicis* [...] *sanctorum imagines non ad adorandum, sed ad memoriam rerum gestarum et venustatem parietum habere permittimus* [...] *illi vero parietes et tabulas adorantes in eo se arbitrentur magnum fidei habere emolumentum, eo quod operibus sint subiecti pictorum*. Trans. in Belting 1994, 534.

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CHAPTER 16

Hades Meets Lazarus

The Literary Katabasis *in Twelfth-Century Byzantium*

Ingela Nilsson

As with most other elements of the Greek tradition, Hades remained part of Byzantine artistic practices and underwent numerous transformations throughout the centuries.* While the previous chapters of this volume have focused primarily on Hades in a Christian setting,[1] I shall here turn to rhetorical and literary elaborations of the *katabasis* motif, belonging rather to the secular sphere – though any such distinction, as we shall see, remains arbitrary and perhaps even misleading. My primary focus is the twelfth century, the so-called Komnenian period of literary experimentation and intense interest in the ancient Greek tradition, not least in the authors and works of the Second Sophistic, such as Lucian. It is not very surprising that such a period produced not one, but several sophisticated reworkings of Lucianic descents to the Underworld, often combined and intertwined with both Homeric and Biblical material. My aim here is to present that material and discuss its function(s) in the socio-cultural context of twelfth-century Constantinople, with a special focus on two *ethopoeiae* by Nikephoros Basilakes.[2] With the help of these two rhetorical exercises we can study both Hades as a setting and Hades impersonated, while also considering the educational and intellectual settings in which such elaborations could be seen as relevant and entertaining.

The Hades of Rhetoricians in the Twelfth Century

The most well-known Byzantine round trip to Hades is the anonymous *Timarion*, a Lucianic dialogue in which the protagonist Timarion describes his experience

* I should like to thank Adam Goldwyn and Charis Messis for reading my draft and offering useful criticism at short notice. This chapter has been written with support from The Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Human Sciences within the frame of the research network *Texte et récit à Byzance*.

1 See the contributions by Ainalis, Arentzen and Maguire in the present volume.

2 Nikephoros Basilakes, *Progymnasmata*, ed. Pignani 1983, no 39 and 45 (*Ethopoeiae* no 10 and 16). English translation by Beneker and Gibson 2016. My focus on the twelfth century

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of Hades to his friend Kydion.[3] At the time of the narration, Timarion is safely back in Constantinople, but his near-death experience appeared as he was travelling back from Thessalonike, where he had taken part in the *Demetria* – the celebrations of St Demetrios, patron saint of Thessalonike. Timarion fell seriously ill and was taken to Hades by two "shadowy and dusty-looking creatures," but as it turns out they had made a mistake. A forensic inspection of his soul, undertaken by Asklepios and Hippokrates, showed that there were still pieces of flesh clinging to it, so Timarion was not quite dead and the soul was taken back to his body. The court procedures and the investigation in Hades took some time, during which Timarion could explore the Underworld in the company of his former teacher, Theodore of Smyrna. These at times rather detailed experiences take up most of the narrative and the Hades of Timarion turns out to host a mixture of ancient and Byzantine characters, living together in apparent harmony in this surprisingly nice realm of the dead.

The *Timarion* has received a fair amount of scholarly attention in the last few years, partly because of the increasing interest in twelfth-century literature and culture, partly because of an increasing understanding of mimetic and educational practices. The dialogue is usually understood as a satire of contemporary society, its political and religious arrangements, and/or as a parody or cento of ancient Greek literature, especially Lucian.[4] There is no apparent conflict between these two readings; a text that is composed as a parody (building on, but not necessarily making fun of the previous tradition) can at the same time function as a satire (expressing criticism of and ridiculing contemporary society). However, a recent study by Byron MacDougall sheds new light on both the text itself and previous interpretations of it by convincingly showing how the *Demetria* in the *Timarion* are modelled on Heliodoros' description of the festival at Delphi in the *Aithiopika*.[5] This particular scene – Timarion's description of Thessalonike and, not least, the local governor – has been seen as particularly 'real' or even 'documentary', serving as evidence

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and Basilakes means that some material from both this and other periods will be left out; for satirical uses of Hades, see the contribution of Marciniak in the present volume; for a fuller survey of katabasis in Byzantium, see Lampakis 1982.

3 *Timarion*, ed. Romano 1974. English translation by Baldwin 1984.

4 The first serious reading of the *Timarion* was Alexiou 1982, a fundamental study on which all subsequent analysis necessarily depends; as regards both satirical and parodical aspects, see also Alexiou 2002, 100–11. For a focus on religion, philosophy and politics, see Kaldellis 2012 and Krallis 2013. For more attention to education and literary imitation, see MacDougall 2016 and Nilsson 2016.

5 MacDougall 2016.

for the dating of the dialogue and the identification of certain characters.[6] While the literary imitation of Heliodoros' novel not necessarily contradicts the presence of contemporary references, it should still encourage us to think more carefully about the relation between content and form – parody and satire. And as noted by MacDougall, his reading means that "we learn something more about the cultural horizons of our author and his twelfth-century Constantinopolitan context" and, perhaps above all, "the Komnenian period's interest in the past as a 'mirror' to the present."[7]

In a similar way, the Underworld is used as a 'mirror' of the upper world, not only in the *Timarion* but also in other texts of the same century. In a less known Hades dialogue composed by a certain Basil Pediadites,[8] we find a "thinly veiled satire" of the regime of Andronikos I, composed shortly after his death.[9] As noted by Paul Magdalino, this is the only Lucianic dialogue that can be related to a specific political episode. With the help of contemporary sources, most notably the *History* of Niketas Choniates, we may identify both the unnamed logothete who arrives in Hades with his head cleft in two (Stephen Hagiochristophorites) and his killer (Isaak Angelos).[10] The judges of the Underworld, Minos and Rhadamanthys, first ask the shadows of the logothete's victims how he should be punished, but they eventually decide to wait until the newly executed tyrant Andronikos arrives in Hades, so they can be punished together. Similar identifications have been attempted in the case of characters appearing in the *Timarion*,[11] but they remain much more uncertain, simply because the text seems to reflect a general tendency rather than a specific episode.

Underlying both texts is undeniably the Lucianic tradition of staging dialogues in Hades,[12] which makes it relevant to briefly consider the status and use of Lucian in the twelfth century. In the first complete survey of the use and imitation of Lucian in Byzantium, Charis Messis shows how the learned Byzantines' relationship with Lucian changed over time in relation to cultural

6 See Kaldellis 2014, 117, and MacDougall 2016, 137 with further references.

7 MacDougall 2016, 150.

8 Basil Pediadites, *Hades dialogue* (*Against Hagiochristophorites*), ed. Manaphes 1976–1977.

9 Magdalino (forthcoming).

10 Magdalino (forthcoming). See also the contribution by Marciniak in this volume.

11 The most interesting example is the probably subversive encomium of a certain member of the Palaiologos family, on which see e.g. Alexiou 1982 and 2002, 105–7; Kaldellis 2012, 278–80 and 286; Mullett 2013, 256–57. Cf. now MacDougall 2016, complicating matters considerably.

12 On the Lucianic dialogues featuring the motif of *katabasis*, see the contribution by Nesselrath in the present volume.

changes in Byzantium: each period "rediscovered Lucian in their own ways and according to their own cultural, literary and educational needs."[13] The combination of an elegant Attic style with a mocking gaze made Lucian useful in so many ways, and he became the perfect model for authors who were striving for social distinction and lucrative positions in society:

> The Byzantine man of letters, like Lucian himself once, had to learn to skilfully manage the various aspects of subversion in the political domain as well as invective and personal attack in the professional sphere. Lucian's style provides the necessary encoding and ritualisation of verbal aggression. Its 'satirical' characteristics accordingly become, both implicitly and explicitly, one of the privileged media of communication between writers and scholars in Byzantium.[14]

In the twelfth century – "the golden age of Lucian in Byzantium"[15] – Lucian is used both in educational settings and, as a result, in literary production as a whole.[16] To mention but a few examples, grammar exercises – so-called *schede*, introduced in the eleventh century and very popular in the twelfth – attest to the presence of Lucian in teaching.[17] The *Dialogues of the Dead* have a prominent place in this material, which clearly affected the subsequent works of the students. An anonymous Lucianic cento, preserved in Codex Ambrosianus gr. 655 and there referred to in Italian as "dialogo Greco ad imitatione di Luciano," can probably be dated to the twelfth century.[18] This text stages a dialogue between Charon, Hermes and Alexander the Great, composed almost entirely by lines drawn from Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead* and *Dialogues of the Gods*, combined with an Aesopic fable.[19] It is difficult to place such a text within an educational setting or beyond, but in either case it shows how central Lucian was to the production of prose in Byzantium.

13 Messis (forthcoming). For another recent study of Lucianic satire, focused on the twelfth century, see Marciniak 2016.

14 Messis (forthcoming).

15 Messis (forthcoming).

16 Markopoulos 2006, 89.

17 For a recent introduction to schedography, see Agapitos 2014. For exercises based on Lucian, see Vassis 2002 on the ms Vaticanus Palatinus gr. 92, 56 (no. 133: paraphrase of Lucian's *Kataplous*); 62 (nos. 191 and 193: paraphrases of passages from Lucian, both from Ἀναβιοῦντες ἢ ἁλιεὺς), and Manaphes 1976–77 on the Marcianus gr. XI 31, 311 (two anonymous schede based on two *Dialogues of the Dead*).

18 Karsay 1971. See also Lampakis 1982, 94–95, and Garland 2000–2001.

19 Christidis 1980.

The same tendency can be noted on higher levels. Well-known scholars and writers of the Komnenian period, such as Eustathios of Thessalonike and John Tzeztes, frequently refer to Lucian, and Theodore Prodromos goes one step further and writes his own satirical texts in a Lucianic vein, as does his student Niketas Eugenianos.[20] Lucian himself is often referred to as *rhetor* (ῥήτωρ) – the same term that was used for contemporary rhetoricians working for the court, i.e. the authors themselves. One could even speak of a sort of authorial identification with Lucian in this century, implicit but distinct, and probably based on the strong presence of Lucianic texts in education.[21] This relationship to Lucian is necessary in order to understand the appearance of not one, but several round trips to Hades in the Komnenian period, and the way in which they are staged. As noted above, one of the key persons that Timarion meets in the Underworld is his former teacher, Theodore of Smyrna – the person who has supposedly taught the author to handle the *katabasis* as a literary motif, based on the dialogues of Lucian. The form becomes a metatextual device, creating powerful links to the tradition in which the author works and with which he identifies.

Against this background, it seems to make perfect sense that Nikephoros Basilakes (c. 1115 to after 1182), a prominent teacher and writer in Constantinople, chose Hades as a setting for two of his *ethopoeiae*. Basilakes was an instructor of rhetoric, becoming Teacher of the Apostle (διδάσκαλος τοῦ ἀποστόλου) about 1140. As teacher at the so-called Patriarchal School attached to the Hagia Sophia, he would have been responsible for teaching the letters of the Apostles, especially the Pauline epistles. As many of his peers, he probably also held the office of imperial notary (νοτάριος), which means that he had close connections to both the court and the church.[22] There is no certain way of dating the *progymnasmata* that have come down to us, but they may have been composed during this rather early phase of his career.[23] Other works include orations and letters, a collection of which has been provided with a prologue by the author, describing his career as rhetor and teacher in Constantinople.[24]

20 For the Prodromic satires, see Romano 1999 and Migliorini 2010; also Cullhed 2016b. Prodromos's student, Niketas Eugenianos, wrote the satirical dialogue *Anacharsis or Ananias*, on which see Cullhed (forthcoming). For a fuller account of the 12th-c. satires with further references, see Messis (forthcoming).

21 Cf. the use of Homer in authorial self-representation in the 12th century, on which see Cullhed 2014.

22 On Basilakes' life and works, see Garzya 1970; on his career, see Browning 1962, 181–84; Magdalino 1993a, 49–51. On the patriarchal school, see also Magdalino 1993b, 325–30.

23 Papioannou 2007, 357.

24 Ed. Garzya 1984, 1–9. For a recent analysis, see Pizzone 2014. Basilakes also wrote schede, discussed in his prologue; see Agapitos 2014, 8–10.

The rhetorical *progymnasmata* were "preliminary exercises" which would take students through the different stages of prose composition.[25] According to Aphthonios, who had composed the most influential handbook in Byzantium, there were fourteen such exercises arranged in an increasing order of difficulty.[26] The *ethopoeia* was number eleven in this sequence, aimed at representing the character of a mythological or historical person through their speech, according to the pattern 'What so-and-so would say in a given situation'. The *ethopoeia* holds a prominent place in the collection of Basilakes, which contains 27 *ethopoeiae* out of 56 *progymnasmata* in total (under the categories of fable, narration, maxim, refutation, confirmation, encomium and *ethopoeia*).[27] This is not very surprising in light of the central place of *ethopoeiae* in Byzantine rhetorical education and in twelfth-century literature. Moreover, many *progymnasmata*, such as the *ekphrasis* and the *ethopoeia*, would function both as exercises for students and as literary works in their own right, intended to entertain and impress both patrons and peers. With these observations in mind, let us look more closely at the two *ethopoeiae* in which Hades is represented.

Ajax and Odysseus in Hades

Let us first consider the *ethopoeia* that is staged in Hades (no 16): "What Ajax would say when he sees Odysseus in the flesh in Hades" (Τίνας ἂν εἴποι λόγους ὁ Αἴας, ἰδὼν ἐν ῞Αδῃ τὸν ᾿Οδυσσέα μετὰ σώματος).[28] As all *ethopoeiae*, it begins *in medias res* with the expression of the pathos of the narrator, here in the form of a question.

> Is that Odysseus here in the flesh, or has my vision been distorted again and have I gone mad? But it is not possible to be ill when one's body no

25 See Kennedy 2003, Webb 2001 (practice). On *progymnasmata* and their significance for Byzantine education, see Schiffer 2010; for Komnenian literature, see Nilsson 2014, 139–45.

26 On Aphthonios in Byzantium, see Kustas 1973, 22–23. Translation in Kennedy 2003, 89–127.

27 On the *ethopoeiae* by Basilakes, see Roilos 2005, 33–40; Papaioannou 2007; Gaul 2014, 263–65; Nilsson 2014, 145–52.

28 The English translation by Beneker and Gibson 2016 appeared just in time for me to use it for the final version of this article. In the following I cite both their translation (with a few revisions) and their slightly revised version of Pignani's edition. References are to lines in Pignani 1983.

> longer survives. While I was still alive I lost my mind, and having made good use of the sword, I freed myself from shame, and from the body itself. These things no longer exist: there is no madness and mental confusion, no distorted vision, no hostile Athens. That man is truly Odysseus – Odysseus, enemy to the gods, the schemer, whom I myself once snatched away from the midst of Trojan swords. And so I fell upon a sword myself; that is how he repaid me. But how can this be? A descent to the realm of Hades in the flesh is strange. Perhaps he eluded Kerberos by some trick; perhaps he deceived Hermes, to whom he ascribed his deceptions.
>
> Ὀδυσσεὺς οὗτος ἐνταυθοῖ μετὰh σώματος ἢ διέστραπταί μοι τὰ τῆς ὄψεως αὖθις καὶ μαίνομαι; καὶ μὴν οὐκ ἔστι νοσεῖν, ὅτε μὴ τὸ σῶμα περίεστιν. Ἐγὼ δέ, καὶ περιὼν ἔτι, τοὺς λογισμοὺς ἀπέβαλον καί, πρὸς καιρὸν τῷ ξίφει χρησάμενος, τῆς αἰσχύνης ἐμαυτὸν αὐτῷ τῷ σώματι προσαπέλυσα. Οὐκ ἔστι ταῦτα, οὐκ ἔστι μανία καὶ φρενῶν παραφορά, οὐκ ὀφθαλμῶν διαστροφαί, οὐ πολέμιος Ἀθηνᾶ. Ὀδυσσεὺς οὗτος ἀληθῶς, Ὀδυσσεὺς ὁ θεοῖς ἐχθρός, ὁ πανοῦργος, ὃν ἐγώ ποτε μέσων ξιφῶν ἀφήρπασα Τρωϊκῶν. Τοιγαροῦν αὐτὸς εἰς ξίφος ἐνέπεσον, τοιαῦτά μοι τὰ λύτρα ἀπέδωκεν. Ἀλλὰ πῶς; Ἐν Ἅιδου μετὰ σώματος παράδοξος ἡ κάθοδος. Ἦπου δόλῳ παρῆλθε τὸν Κέρβερον, ἦπου καὶ τὸν Ἑρμῆν παρεκρούσατο, ὃν τοῖς δόλοις αὐτὸς ἐπεγράφετο.[29]

A first concern here is the fact that Odysseus arrives in the Underworld "in the flesh" (μετὰ σώματος), which is impossible or at least paradoxical (ἐν Ἅδου μετὰ σώματος παράδοξος ἡ κάθοδος). We have already encountered this problem in the *Timarion*: the protagonist had to return to the upper world because he had not quite left his bodily form.[30] Odysseus is alive – yet another sign of his treacherous nature. Ajax now turns to Hermes, elaborating on the tricks played on the god by Odysseus, who "now wanders in the realm of Hades and meddles in the affairs of the Underworld" (νῦν ἐν Ἅδου διάγει καὶ πολυπραγμονεῖ τὰ ὑπὸ γῆν).[31] He then catches sight of Odysseus' armour and sword, "the sword that made me thrust another sword into my side" (ἐφ' ᾧ κατὰ τῆς πλευρᾶς ξίφος ἕτερον ὤθησα), expressing his bitterness

29 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 16, 1–13.

30 This is the case made by Theodore of Smyrna on Timarion's behalf, accusing the "corpse conductors" (νεκροπομποί) of "snatching away a soul from a body that is still living" (ψυχὴν ἀποσπᾶν τοῦ σώματος ἔτι ζωτικῶς ἔχοντος), referring to the "laws of the dead" that "expressly state that no sound should be brought down to Hades before the body is fatally damaged" (*Timarion* 32–34). The process ends in a decision stating the same thing (*Timarion* 41).

31 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 16, 19–20.

at Odysseus' actions while Ajax "still had a body" (ἐν σώματι) – his winning the armour of Achilles, which supposedly led to Ajax killing himself.[32] In desperation, Ajax now turns to Palamedes – another of the Greek warriors wronged by Odysseus at Troy[33] – asking him to summon the judges of the Underworld (Aiakos, Minos, Rhadamanthys), who will perhaps judge Odysseus for his misdeeds, so that "like another Tantalos, he will receive a stone as recompense for the many stones launched at you" (λίθον ὡς ἄλλος Τάνταλος λήψεται τῶν πολλῶν λίθων ἐκείνων ἀντίποινον).[34]

The comparison between Odysseus and Tantalos moves on to one between Odysseus and Sisyphos, culminating in the statement that Odysseus is the son of Sisyphos, emulating him: "Hades has been wronged by both father and son: he released the father's soul from the depths of the pit, and he received the son before he had discarded his body. The one abused the ascent, while the other, in turn, abused the descent." (Πρὸς πατρὸς καὶ παιδός, ἀμφοτέρωθεν Ἅιδης ἠδίκηται, πατρὸς ψυχὴν ἐκ μέσου κευθμῶνος ἀποβαλὼν καὶ παῖδα μήπω τὸ σῶμα ἐκδύντα δεξάμενος. Ὁ μὲν περὶ τὴν ἄνοδον ἐκακούργησεν, ὁ δὲ περὶ τὴν κάθοδον αὖθις ἠσέβησεν.)[35] The *ethopoeia* ends in the despair of Ajax, forced to watch Odysseus entering Hades and still remembering the past, in spite of having drunk from the river Lethe – if this does not end, he shall have to escape:

> I will go somewhere into the depths of Hades. O Plouton, Aiakos, and all you gods of the underworld, may I never again recall the armor and the madness caused by it, and may I never again see Odysseus. Otherwise I will have to abandon Hades, as I once abandoned the earth, and descend again from here into Tartaros.
>
> Πορεύσομαι περί που τοὺς Ἅδου μυχούς. Γένοιτο δή μοι, ὦ Πλούτων καὶ Αἰακὲ καὶ πάντες ὑπὸ γῆν θεοί, μήτε τὰ ὅπλα καὶ τὴν ἐπ' ἐκείνοις μανίαν εἰς νοῦν αὖθις λαβεῖν, μήτ' αὐτὸν ἰδεῖν Ὀδυσσέα. Ἢ δεήσει μοι καὶ τὸν Ἅιδην ἀπολιπεῖν, ὡς πάλαι τὴν γῆν, καὶ καταδῦναι πάλιν ἐνθένδε εἰς Τάρταρον.[36]

A number of literary strands come together in this *ethopoeia*, primarily the Ajax narratives of Homer's *Odyssey* and Sophocles' *Ajax*. Homer is rather

32 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 16, 24–33.

33 Palamedes is also the topic of another *progymnasma* in the Basilakes collection, *Diegema* 15.

34 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 16, 33–39.

35 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 16, 51–55.

36 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 16, 70–75.

vague about the way in which Ajax dies, though his death is ascribed to the dispute between Odysseus and Ajax over the armour of Achilles. As Odysseus descends into Hades, Ajax is the only spirit that does not want to speak to him: "still full of wrath for the victory that I had won over him in the contest by the ships for the arms of Achilles" (Od. 11.544–46: […] κεχολωμένη εἵνεκα νίκης, / τήν μιν ἐγὼ νίκησα δικαζόμενος παρὰ νηυσὶ / τεύχεσιν ἀμφ᾽ Ἀχιλῆο […]). Odysseus speaks to him, praising him and asking him to subdue his wrath (Od. 11.553–62), but Ajax refuses to respond and descends silently back into the shadows of the Underworld (Od. 11.563–64). A fuller version of the story, or perhaps rather a prequel, is offered in Sophocles' *Ajax*, where Ajax is so infuriated and insulted after Odysseus has been awarded the armour that he wants to kill the judges, Agamemnon and Menelaos. Athena intervenes by "clouding his mind" so that he kills a flock of sheep instead of the Greeks. As he comes to his senses, covered in blood, he is so ashamed that he kills himself, after having uttered the proverbial "But the noble man must either live well or die well" (*Ajax* 470–80: ἀλλ᾽ ἢ καλῶς ζῆν ἢ καλῶς τεθνηκέναι / τὸν εὐγενῆ χρή).

In Basilakes' *ethopoeia*, it is clear that these events have taken place, but that Ajax still blames Odysseus for his suicide and hates the look of the armour for which they fought:

> I cannot bear to look upon my own killer; because of him I thrust the sword into my side. I cannot bear to see my own suit of armor, whose original wearer, having fallen dead, I snatched away from Trojan insult and which, dying myself, I lost through insult.
>
> οὐ φέρω τὸν ἐμὸν αὐτόχειρα βλέπειν, δι᾽ ὃν τὸ ξίφος ὤθησα κατὰ τῆς πλευρᾶς. οὐ φέρω τὴν ἐμὴν πανοπλίαν ὁρᾶν, ἧς πεσόντα τὸν ὁπλίτην ὕβρεως ἐξήρπασα Τρωϊκῆς, καί, τελευτῶν, αὐτὸς εἰς ὕβριν ἐξέπεσον.[37]

This is surely the Ajax that refuses to speak to Odysseus in Homer's version, the character that silently moves into the shadows of Erebos. He is the perfect character for an *ethopoeia*, not only because he is associated with anger and pathos, but also because in Homer he *does not speak*. The present *ethopoeia* thus can be seen as a direct response to the Homeric episode, offering the words that Homer (or his narrator Odysseus) never recorded.

37 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 16, 65–69.

At the same time, this is the Ajax of Sophocles, who in the well-known verses 430–33 underlines the hero's *Sprechender Name*:

> Aiai! My name is a lament!
> Who would have thought it would fit
> so well with my misfortunes!
> Now truly I can cry out – aiai! –
> two and three times in my agony.
>
> αἰαῖ: τίς ἄν ποτ᾽ ᾤεθ᾽ ὧδ᾽ ἐπώνυμον
> τοὐμὸν ξυνοίσειν ὄνομα τοῖς ἐμοῖς κακοῖς;
> νῦν γὰρ πάρεστι καὶ δὶς αἰάζειν ἐμοὶ
> καὶ τρίς: τοιούτοις γὰρ κακοῖς ἐντυγχάνω.[38]

In Basilakes' *ethopoeia*, the suffering Ajax of Homer thus recovers the lamenting voice of Sophocles, only now put forward in prose. Such a combination of two narrative traditions is quite reasonable in light of the educational setting in which Basilakes and his students were active. While Homer's position in Byzantium was central and undeniable, not the least in the twelfth century with the *Commentaries* on the Homeric songs by Eustathios of Thessalonike and the *Allegories* of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* by John Tzetzes,[39] *Ajax* was one of the Sophoclean plays of the so-called Byzantine triad – a play that all Byzantine students had read and were familiar with.[40] This explains the appearance of lines 470–80 cited above in, for instance, the *Alexiad* of Anna Komnene, who writes about how her father Alexios I Komnenos cites Sophocles in an emotional moment of speaking to his men.[41] This close knowledge of both the Homeric and the Sophoclean Ajax prepared a contemporary

38 Sophocles, *Ajax* 430–33. There are many different translations of this tricky passage; here I have chosen to cite Herbert Golder's translation in Burian and Shapiro 2010.

39 On Homer in the twelfth century with a special focus on Eustathios, see Cullhed 2016a, 18*–25*. See also the introduction to the translation of Tzetzes' *Allegories on the Iliad*, Goldwyn and Kokkini 2015, vii–xxiv.

40 On Sophocles in Byzantine education and culture, see Easterling 2003. The triad of Sophocles was composed of *Ajax*, *Electra* and *Oidipus Rex*.

41 Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, 2.10.13; on this passage, see Neville 2012, 165. As noted by Neville, it is possible that the Sophoclean quote had become a proverbial expression by the twelfth century, but it also reads well as an allusion to Ajax in the Sophoclean context. Cf. Buckley 2014, 38 and n. 3 on another citation from *Ajax* (646–47) in the *Alexiad* (1.1), probably not referring to Ajax personally but rather to a tragic narrative mode. On the Sophoclean lines and their transmission also in collections of excerpts, see Easterling 2003, 327.

audience – whether students or more advanced literati – for the kind of character study that we find in Basilakes' *ethopoeia*, making it part of a longer tradition and at the same time offering a new narrative and rhetorical angle.

Hades Meets Lazarus

In the second *ethopoeia* (no 10), "What Hades would say when Lazarus is raised from the dead on the fourth day," we find the Classical tradition merging with that of the Bible, both the Old and the New Testament. This is particularly interesting in light of the longer tradition of *ethopoeia*: although we know of three poetic *ethopoeiae* featuring biblical characters dating from the fourth century, there are no prose *ethopoeiae* on such themes until the early twelfth century, written by Nikolaos Mouzalon – Basilakes' teacher.[42] Of the 27 *ethopoeiae* in the Basilakes collection, 14 feature Christian characters while only no. 10 mixes pagan and Christian in a manner that seems rather striking and that reminds us of the *Timarion*.[43]

As already noted, the narrator here is Hades himself, expressing his emotional reaction at the resurrection of Lazarus – the loss of his authority and power:

> Alas, I who expected to see and experience everything before I had a dead man snatched away from me! After this burial I experienced the intolerable, I saw the unexpected, and I have been deprived of my authority over the departed. Alas, we who rule the Underworld in vain! What kind of kingdom will we rule, if after we receive the dead we are deprived of them, and if after holding them fast, we do not hold them forever? I tore a soul from a body and, although already confident in my mastery, I have been despoiled of my power at the very height of my power, and although ruling over the dead, I am insulted by those still living.
>
> Ὦ πάντα πρότερον ἰδεῖν τε καὶ παθεῖν ἐλπίσας ἐγὼ ἢ νεκρὸν ἀφαιρεθῆναι! Καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἐκφορὰν ἔπαθον τὰ ἀνύποιστα, εἶδον τὰ ἀπροσδόκητα, περιῄρημαι τοὺς ἐπὶ τοῖς οἰχομένοις θεσμούς. Ὦ μάτην ὑπὸ γῆν κρατοῦντες ἡμεῖς! Τίνα ταύτην ἀρχὴν ἄρξομεν, εἰ καὶ μετὰ τὸ λαβεῖν ἀφαιρούμεθα καί, κατασχόντες,

42 See the introduction by Beneker and Gibson 2016, xii–xiii, with further references.

43 On the Christian themes in Basilakes, see Pignani 1983, 43–44; Roilos 2005, 33. In general, the overtly erotic themes have attracted more attention than the Christian; see the works cited above, n. 27; also Beaton 1996, 24–25.

> εἰς τέλος οὐκ ἔχομεν; Ψυχὴν ἀπέσπασα σώματος καί, τὸ κρατεῖν ἤδη θαρρῶν, παρ᾽ αὐτὴν τὴν τοῦ κρατεῖν ἀκμὴν τὸ κράτος ἀποσεσύλημαι καί, νεκρῶν ἔχων τὴν ἀρχήν, τοῖς γε περιοῦσιν ἔτι περιυβρίζομαι.[44]

Hades goes on: "From where does this strange new war come to us? Who, although having a mortal nature, has boasted even against death?" (Πόθεν ὁ καινὸς οὗτος ἡμῖν πόλεμος; Τίς, θνητὴν ἔχων φύσιν, καὶ θανάτου κατηλαζονεύσατο;) – a rhetorical question that he immediately answers himself: "I am being attacked again by the Jews" (Ἐξ Ἰουδαίων αὖθις βάλλομαι).[45] Hades has conquered all people, he says; only the Jews have given him problems, starting with the prophet Elisha. Elisha mocked Hades in life, by raising the dead, and then in death, by raising the dead by the touch of his own dead body.[46] So did his teacher, Elijah.[47] It is now their descendant, says Hades, who causes him trouble:

> This man has undermined my rule; more than any other, this man has put an end to death, does not let the dead be, and does not let go those who are destined to die. I shoot my deadly arrow, and the wounded person suffers the utmost pains, but as soon as this man comes and threatens the disease, it immediately departs in flight.
>
> οὗτός μου τὴν ἀρχὴν παρεσάλευσεν, οὗτος ὑπὲρ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνέλυσε τὴν ἀνάλυσιν καὶ κειμένους οὐκ ἐᾷ καὶ πεσεῖν μέλλοντας οὐκ ἀφίησιν. Ἐπαφίημι πρὸς τελευτὴν τὸ βέλος ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ τρωθεὶς ἀλγεῖ τὰ ἔσχατα· ὁ δ᾽, εὐθὺς ἐλθών, ἐπαπειλεῖται τῇ νόσῳ καὶ παραχρῆμα οἴχεται, δραπετεύουσα.[48]

This has happened repeatedly, says Hades, so that dead people escape the laws of death and live even after being deprived of their bodies.[49] We recognize the motif from the previous *ethopoeia* and the *Timarion*: a dead person has

44 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 10, 1–10.

45 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 10, 10–14.

46 Elisha first raised a boy from the dead while he was still alive (4 Kings 4:8–37). After his death, a dead man was put in his grave and when he came in contact with the corpse (or bones) of Elisha he came alive (4 Kings 13:20–21).

47 Elijah is said to have ascended to heaven in a whirlwind and thus cheated Hades (4 Kings 2:11).

48 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 10, 31–36.

49 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 10, 36–45. For the other two resurrections accomplished by Jesus, see Matthew 9:18–26 and Luke 8:41–55 (the daughter of Jairus) and Luke 7:11–15 (the only son of a widow).

no body and should therefore not be alive; alternatively, a person with a body cannot descend to and spend time in Hades. This (still unnamed) man has now achieved the impossible: he has "restored to life a man – alas! a dead man who had already spent time in Hades. I inflicted mortal wounds and he died; I tore him from his body, and he offered no resistance." (οὐχ ἁπλῶς ἄνθρωπον τεθνηκότα ἐζώωσεν, ἀλλ᾽ ἄνθρωπον, οἴμοι, νεκρὸν καὶ ἐν Ἅιδου χρονίσαντα. Ἔβαλλον τὰ καίρια καὶ πέπτωκεν, ἀπέσπασα τοῦ σώματος, ὁ δ᾽ οὐκ ἀντέτεινε.).[50] It is not until now that the man is named:

> He [Lazarus] claimed that an ally would come and prophesied an attack against me, but I considered this absurd and believed that it was all nonsense. I asked him who the ally was, and he said "Jesus." I merely heard the name, and from that moment I suspected that the dead man would be taken away.
>
> Ξύμμαχον ἥκειν ἔφασκε καὶ πληγάς μοι προσεπεμαντεύετο, ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἐποιούμην κατάγελων καὶ λήρους εἶναι πάντας ἐνόμιζον. Ἐπυθόμην καὶ τίς ὁ ξύμμαχος, ὁ δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἔλεγεν. Ἤκουσα καὶ μόνον τὴν κλῆσιν καὶ τὸ ἐντεῦθεν ὑπώπτευον τὴν ἀφαίρεσιν.[51]

In the following passage, the days of Lazarus in Hades are described in some detail, including the corporeal decay of his body ("His body had already began to smell, and time had torn apart the joints of his limbs," Ἤδη τι καὶ τοῦ σώματος ὄδωδε καὶ τὰς τῶν μελῶν ἁρμονίας ὁ χρόνος διέσπασεν), making Hades think that he may not leave after all.[52] And yet, on that fourth day, Jesus comes and orders him to release Lazarus. There is reason to cite this long passage in full, since it represents the emotional (and paradoxical, in a rhetorical sense) climax of the *ethopoeia*.

> But alas, the sudden scheme! Alas, the surprise attack! Jesus came, *he wept*, and seeing his tears I though his suffering was human, and I, the wretch, became confident from this that I would not suffer at all. The grave opened up, but I still did not comprehend the battle; for the fact that his body had already been broken down was also breaking down my fear and making me confident that his body would no longer be able to possess a soul. I considered all those who have come back to life

50 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 10, 44–45.
51 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 10, 46–50.
52 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 10, 56–59.

> after death, and I found that they were all absolutely dead after the first day, but – O earth and laws of Hades and divine laws of nature! Jesus rebuked, ordered and threatened, and I did not endure the threat. But Lazarus flew out of my hands and put on his body, and that great passage of time was refuted, and the slackness of his body again received a new unifying bond.
>
> Ἀλλ᾽ ὢ τῆς ἀθρόας ἐπιβουλῆς! Ὢ τῆς ἐξαίφνης ἐπιθέσεως! Ἧκεν, ἐδάκρυσε· καί, δάκρυον ἰδών, τὸ πάθος ᾤμην ἀνθρώπινον καὶ τὸ μηδέν τι παθεῖν ὁ δείλαιος ἐντεῦθεν ἐθάρρησα. Ὁ τάφος ἀνεῴγει, ἐγὼ δ᾽ οὐκ εἰς νοῦν ἔτι τὴν μάχην ἐλάμβανον· τὸ γὰρ ἤδη λελύσθαι τὸ σῶμα κἀμὲ τοῦ δέους ἐξέλυε καὶ θαρρεῖν ἐποίει μηκέτι ψυχὴν καθέξειν δυνήσεσθαι. Ἐλογιζόμην τούς, ὅσοι καὶ μετὰ τελευτὴν βεβιώκασι, καὶ μετὰ πρώτην ἡμέραν εἰς τὸ παντελὲς κειμένους ἅπαντας εὕρισκον· ὁ δέ, ὦ γῆ καὶ Ἅιδου νόμοι καὶ θεσμοὶ φύσεως, ἐνεβριμήσατο, ἐπέταξεν, ἐπηπείλησε καὶ τὴν ἀπειλὴν οὐχ ὑπήνεγκα. Ὁ δέ μου τῶν χειρῶν ἀπέπτη καὶ τὸ σῶμα ἐνέδυ καὶ ὁ πολὺς ἐκεῖνος χρόνος ἠλέγχετο καὶ τὸ τοῦ σώματος παρειμένον καινὸν αὖθις ἐδέχετο σύνδεσμον.[53]

Again, the emphasis on the corporeal reactions to death and the bond between body and soul is strong, almost medical in its description of the "slackness" of the dead body (supposedly the loss of *rigor mortis*) and close to the scientific deliberations in the *Timarion*. Hades becomes a sort of forensic examiner who has misjudged the corpse delivered to his office, cheated by Jesus, transgressing the laws of nature. His attention thus shifts from Lazarus (who is already lost) to his still enigmatic enemy: "Will I ever receive this enemy in my hand? Will I ever master my attacker? I hear that the rest of the Jews are at arms, and perhaps thanks to this I will not be unlucky" (Ἆρα δέξομαί ποτε τὸν πολέμιον τοῦτον εἰς χεῖρας ἐγώ; Ἀρά ποτε κρατήσω τοῦ βάλλοντος; Μανθάνω τοὺς λοιποὺς Ἰουδαίους ὁπλίζεσθαι καὶ τάχα τοῦτο τὸ μέρος οὐκ ἀτυχήσομαι.)[54] The time of narration is the time of Lazarus' resurrection and accordingly a time before Jesus' own death at the hand of "the other Jews" (τοὺς λοιποὺς Ἰουδαίους),[55] so the rumours that Hades refer to anticipate Jesus' own descent into Hades – a typical motif in Byzantine art, well-known by the contemporary audience. Still, Hades does not remain confident, but adds a note of suspicion, referring to the nature of Jesus – another thoroughly discussed topic in orthodox society: "But alas, I again have a suspicion about the future: I fear that Jesus may

53 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 10, 59–72.

54 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 10, 73–76.

55 On the origins of the myth of Jews as "Christ killers," see Cohen 2007, 15–70.

be a god,[56] even if he is mortal in appearance." (Ἀλλ' οἴμοι πάλιν ὑποπτεύω τὸ μέλλον, δέδοικα μὴ καὶ θεὸς ᾖ, κἂν θνητὸς τὸ φαινόμενον).[57]

In the context of this volume, the representation of Hades' emotional reaction to Jesus, his nature and his workings, offers an interesting example of the frequent co-existence of the pagan and the Christian strands of Greek tradition in Byzantine literature. For a twelfth-century reader, Hades was as much part of the Christian as the pagan tradition, and this kind of *ethopoeia* would probably point as much in the direction of hymns as to Homer and Greek myth. As noted by Herber Hunger in his seminal history of Byzantine literature: "Auch hier erinnert man sich an die Anastasis-Kontakia des Romanos, in denen Hades und Thanatos als Personen auftreten und von Christus im Kampf überwunden werden."[58] And yet, this deliberate and at least in part playful merging of Christian and pagan narrative elements is rather different from the earlier inclusion of Hades in apocalypses, hymns and hagiographies, and also from later Byzantine uses of the *katabasis* motif in the Palaiologan romances.[59] Within the rhetorical sphere, form is everything and (pagan) Hades can safely be given both voice and narrative agency, without threatening (Christian) society.[60] And in either case, within Basilakes' storyworld Hades seems aware of his somewhat gloomy future – his "zweifelhaften Zukunftsaussichten," as Hunger put it: he will soon be literally placed under the foot of Jesus, under the rule of Christianity.[61]

The Significance of a Literary *Katabasis*

The use of the *katabasis* motif in Byzantine literature offered an attractive possibility to stage meetings between the two contrasting and complementing

56 Beneker and Gibson 2016 translate "I fear that Jesus may even be God," which is correct but does not reflect the storyworld of the *ethopoeia*: Hades is not a monotheist, so even if the 12th-century reader may grasp the linguistic ambiguity of the passage and read it as Beneker and Gibson, Hades is likely to intend rather "a god" (like himself).

57 Basilakes, *Ethopoeia* 10, 77–79.

58 Hunger 1978, 113. On Romanos the Melodos, see the contribution by Arentzen in the present volume.

59 Cupane 2014 and Moennig 2014. The katabasis motif in this context refers rather to the journey into another dimension and the image of the terrestrial paradise, shared by several Palaiologan romances (*Livistros and Rhodamne*, *Belthandros and Chrysantza*, *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*).

60 Beck 1974, 22; cf. Roilos 2005, 34–36.

61 For the iconographic representation of such imagery, see the contribution by Maguire in this volume.

aspects of the Greek tradition, on the levels of both content and form. With Homer and the Lucianic dialogue as a basis – the latter being, at the same time, a take on the Platonic dialogue – authors could add textual and narrative elements from later periods and thus stage literary and philosophical encounters *within* a recognizable story-world such as Hades. In the *Timarion*, such strategies were taken to their extreme, which caused a later Byzantine reader to react against the anonymous author's "ungodly" representation of Christians and pagans.[62] While parts of Basilakes' two *ethopoeiae* resemble the *Timarion* (Hades as narrative setting, the encounter between Christians and pagans, the interest in forensic details and corporeal decay), they are much more rhetorical set pieces and could in that capacity probably escape moral and theological critique. As exercises they were highly useful for Byzantine students and as models they were equally useful for senior writers, offering ways of handling narrative and linguistic aspects of a complex tradition such as the Greek.

The combination of pagan and Christian elements was simply a crucial and inevitable part of the rhetorician's task. Basilakes himself offers a case in point, and he was not unique in twelfth-century Constantinople. As teacher at the Patriarchal School and imperial notary he was expected to handle these partly overlapping roles, offering orations – sometimes perhaps even encomiastic speeches to the emperor[63] – that would reconcile various parts of the Greek heritage. A professional man of letters in this position had to be both a teacher, a politician and a theologian, which means that we cannot draw any strict line between the domains of school, court and church in twelfth-century Constantinople.[64] After 1150 Basilakes became involved in a theological debate over the nature of the eucharist, concerning the question of whether the sacrifice was for the Father alone or for the Trinity. Two synods in 1156 and 1157 decided that the latter was orthodox, which meant that the first was the heretical view. Basilakes, who had sided with Soterichos Panteugenos, promoting the 'wrong' view, was condemned and banished to Philippopolis (Plovdiv in Bulgaria).[65] This event shows how important it was for a professional rhetor to

62 For Akrolites' text, see Romano 1974, 42–45; English translation in Baldwin 1984, 24–28. On the attitude of Akropolites, see Alexiou 2002, 109, arguing that it was the tolerance towards other religions in *Timarion* 725–29 that drove Akropolites to his critique of its "anti-Christian" message. See also Kaldellis 2012, Krallis 2013 and Nilsson 2016.

63 Beneker and Gibson 2016, XIV.

64 Cf. Zagklas 2014, 73–87, discussing primarily the case of Theodore Prodromos but also 12th-century Constantinople more generally.

65 On the controversy and Basilakes' involvement, see Magdalino 1993a, 151–52, and Pizzone 2014, 239–42 with further references.

manage all roles in a satisfactory manner, reminding us that even small details such as the reference to the nature of Jesus in the second *ethopoeia* could have important theological implications at certain times in Byzantine history.

To conclude, a literary *katabasis* in the twelfth century could be more than simply an entertaining story. It could accommodate social and cultural criticism, as in the case of the Komnenian *Timarion* and the late Byzantine *Mazaris*,[66] but it could also, as in the case of the two *ethopoeiae* by Basilakes discussed here, open up a fruitful storyworld for ideological reflection on the Greek heritage while, at the same time, offer educational practise of rhetorical forms.

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66 Since the historical and socio-cultural context of the *Mazaris* is so different from the *Timarion*, it has not been included here; see Garland 2007 and the contribution by Marciniak in this volume.

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CHAPTER 17

"Heaven for Climate, Hell for Company"

Byzantine Satirical Katabaseis

Przemysław Marciniak

Byzantine* *katabaseis* and *anabaseis*[1] can be roughly divided into two types: serious works, such as the *Vision of Anastasia* and the *Vision of the Monk Kosmas*, and satirical ones, whose well-known representatives are the twelfth-century *Timarion*[2] and the fifteen-century *Journey of Mazaris to Hades* (hereafter *Mazaris*).[3] However, if the motif of satirical *katabaseis* is treated more broadly to include other texts that describe the Underworld, this list can be expanded to incorporate two other works: the *Dialogue of the Dead*, satirizing the late Stephanos Hagiochristophorites (1185?) (hereafter *Against Hagiochristophorites*),[4] and the anonymous διάλογος νεκρικός between Charon, Hermes, and Alexander the Great, which is difficult to place chronologically.[5] The latter, a Lucianic centonic work, is very interesting from a literary perspective, but since it lacks the satirical element and therefore the contemporary/Byzantine component, it does not contribute much to our understanding of the satirical Underworld. My discussion will therefore focus primarily on the other three works (*Timarion*, *Against*

* One of the many versions of this saying is recorded in the following anecdote: "Dying man couldn't make up his mind which place to go to – both have their advantages, 'heaven for climate, hell for company!'." This quote has been ascribed to various authors, but most famously to Mark Twain. Although Byzantine Heaven has its advantages, it is Byzantine Hell that, in my opinion, offers more interesting research perspectives. This paper is part of the project funded by the National Science Centre UMO-2013/10/E/HS2/00170.

1 For instance, Anastasia's journey to the Otherworld is, in fact, an *anabasis*, for she travels to Heaven where she visits both Paradise and Hell; see Baun 2007.

2 *Timarion*, ed. Romano 1974; trans. Baldwin 1984. All citations in the following refer to this edition and this translation.

3 *Mazaris*, ed. Barry et al. 1975 (with trans.). All citations from this text refer to this edition and this translation.

4 *Against Hagiochristophorites*, ed. Manafis 1977; English translation Garland 2000–2001. All citations from this text refer to this edition and this translation.

5 Karsay 1971, 383–91, who proposes the Palaiologan period. The first edition was Caccia 1914, 145–49. See also Sokolova 1975 and Christidis 1980.

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Hagiochristophorites, *Mazaris*), as I examine how satirical otherworlds are constructed and how satire is achieved.

These three satires are fairly heterogeneous texts that convey different visions of the afterlife. The anonymous *Timarion* is a product of the intensified Komnenian interest in Antiquity,[6] telling the story of the eponymous hero, who, having been incorrectly assumed dead by the demons, is taken to the Underworld; after a trial, he is returned to the land of the living.[7] The *Mazaris* is a satirical work, belonging to the genre of διάλογος νεκρικός and written between January 1414 and October 1415.[8] The text consists of the following three parts: the first is the account of Mazaris' stay in Hades,[9] the second describes his dream after his return to the world of the living, and the third comprises three letters (one from Mazaris to Manuel Holobolos, another from Holobolos to the doctor Nikephoros Doukas Palaiologos Malakes and, finally, Malakes' reply). Manuscript B (Berol. gr. 173) contains a letter of dedication to the Despot of Morea. Lynda Garland argues that the *Mazaris* "is essentially Lucianic, but the work as a whole owes most to Aristophanes, in terms of the language, insult tradition, and general ambience."[10] This is perhaps an unnecessary separation of two complementary traditions. At the vocabulary level, the *Mazaris* draws upon vocabulary from Aristophanic comedies indeed, but the concept of the underground is much more Lucianic. Moreover, the anonymous author reminds readers about his debt to the satirist, since Lucian himself is mentioned as one of the shady figures living in the Underworld.[11]

6 On the intensified interest in Antiquity in this period, see Kaldellis 2008, 225–316, and the seminal work by Magdalino 1993.

7 Recent studies on *Timarion* accentuate its literary character; see Nilsson 2016, 180–204, and less convincingly Kaldellis 2012, 275–88.

8 Literature on *Mazaris* is rather paltry and very few scholars have attempted to look at this text as a literary work and not simply as a source of prosopographical information, see Baldwin 1993, 345–58, and more recently Garland 2007, 183–214.

9 Scholars have unsuccesfully attempted to identify Mazaris. Earlier scholars believed that 'Mazaris' was the author's real name, for which see Lambros 1896, 63: "Mazaris is der wirkliche, nicht erdichteter Name des Authors."

10 Garland 2007, 185. For the sake of my analysis it is unimportant whether the officials satirized in the work were dead or alive at the time of its presentation.

11 *Mazaris* 39.14–15: "The younger Alousianos (straight from the house of Patrokles, who never washed), belongs to the inner circle, with Loukios or the ass." *Mazaris* is not the only text of this period, which, quite inexplicably, mentions this work that was believed to be penned by Lucian. For instance, *Loukios or the Ass* is the subject of a 14th-c. allegorical interpretation authored by Alexios Makrembolites.

Hades in the *Timarion* and in the *Mazaris* is not exactly a simple counterpart of the Christian hell, even if it has some Christian elements.[12] While saying goodbye to Mazaris, Holobolos lists various forms of punishment in Hades, mixing both mythological (jaws of Kerberos and tortures of Tartaros) and typically Christian penances (venomous worm and unquenchable fire).[13] Although at the beginning of his stay in the underground, Timarion states that everything in Hades seems "well and truly hateful and abominable" (πάντα μὲν ἁπλῶς τὰ ἐν Ἅιδου μισητὰ δοκοῦσι καὶ ἀποτρόπαια; *Timarion* 18), he later finds more pleasant things down there as well, such as the Elysian Fields and meadows of asphodel (ch. 30). Mazaris' Hades is harsher and full of people whose main motivation is envy, well expressed in the Hesiodic passage "The beggar detests the beggar, the poet, the poet, the carpenter, the carpenter" (*Mazaris* 58.18–19: Καὶ πτωχὸς πτωχῷ κοτέει καὶ ἀοιδὸς ἀοιδῷ καὶ τέκτονι τέκτων).[14] This envy goes so far that those who suffer from gouty legs and hands are jealous of those who suffer from gouty legs only (*Mazaris* 58.31). Above all, the dead sinners in *Mazaris* hate those who led good and pious lives (*Mazaris* 58.21–23).

While both the *Timarion* and the *Mazaris* are labelled as dialogues, they are in fact a monologue with some dialogical elements (*Timarion*) and a more complex narrative, with the narrator speaking and reporting conversations with the fellow dead (*Mazaris*). Basically, this is a structure of Lucianic dialogue blended with the traditional first-person narration of the Byzantine journey to the otherworld, such as the aforementioned *Vision of Anastasia* or the *Vision of the Monk Kosmas*. The satire *Against Hagiochristophorites*, which is also clearly modelled on Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, is a political satire directed against the treasury minister of Emperor Andronikos I (1183–1185).[15] It differs from the other two works also in terms of composition. *Against Hagiochristophorites* is more deeply rooted in the tradition of the διάλογος νεκρικός as it is a conversation among several characters and also includes a reminiscence of a chorus in the form of a "mob of the dead" (πλῆθος νεκρῶν). This satirical work is also strictly pagan since the Underworld looks like a proper, non-Christianized Hades. The only contemporary (Byzantine) element is Stephanos Hagiochristophorites, who is sent to the pagan Hades rather than to the Christian hell.

12 Bzinkowski 2015, 129–48.

13 *Mazaris* 60.4–7. On worms in Hades, see Baun 2007, 84–87.

14 It is Holobolos, Mazaris' cicerone, who refers to this passage; cf. Hesiod, *Works and Days* 25–26: καὶ κεραμεὺς κεραμεῖ κοτέει καὶ τέκτονι τέκτων | καὶ πτωχὸς πτωχῷ φθονέει καὶ ἀοιδὸς ἀοιδῷ.

15 On Stephanos Hagiochristophorites, see Garland 1999, 18–23.

In all three texts, the Underworld is guarded by Kerberos and the mythological judges, Aiakos, Minos and Rhadamanthys, with one notable exception. In the *Timarion*, Rhadamanthys is replaced by Emperor Theophilos (829–842). Scholars have asked why Theophilos, the iconoclast emperor, is chosen to be a judge of souls, but nobody has asked why he replaces Rhadamanthys. I doubt that this was a random decision. Rhadamanthys has a considerable literary presence: he is mentioned in Plato's *Gorgias* and, more importantly, appears as a character in Lucian's *True Stories*. His activities in those two texts may provide the careful reader with an answer as to why he is absent from the Byzantine–Christian Hades. In *Gorgias*, Rhadamanthys is said to judge Asiatic souls (καὶ τοὺς μὲν ἐκ τῆς Ἀσίας Ῥαδάμανθυς κρινεῖ).[16] In Lucian's work, the presence of Rhadamanthys means an invitation to all "barbarians and Hellenes alike, to take equal part in playing Lucian's game."[17] I argue that in the *Timarion*, the absence of Rhadamanthys means the exact opposite – this Hades is exclusively Graeco-Roman, with no barbarians allowed. Furthermore, *True Stories* might also offer an explanation as to why both Socrates and Plato are absent among the philosophers whom Timarion meets in Hades – according to Lucian's work, Socrates is with Rhadamanthys on the Isle of the Blessed, while Plato is said to live in his imaginary city. Whether or not there are political reasons behind leaving out those philosophers,[18] Lucian, the literary model of the *Timarion*, could have provided an answer to such a decision.

Understandably, the works under examination do not present a unified view of the humorous afterlife. Nevertheless, all three texts follow the tradition of depicting the Underworld/Hades as established by Lucian: characters from various historical periods can freely interact among themselves and also with mythological and legendary figures – time itself seems of little consequence. Hades can be simultaneously a scary and a pleasant place (*Timarion*), and its inhabitants can quite illogically attempt to kill somebody who is definitely dead by throwing their heads and hands at him (*Against Hagiochristophorites* 149–54). In this sense, the satirical depictions of the Underworld are unnatural narratives – physical and logical laws governing the world of the living are suspended. Byzantine satirical narratives about the Underworld depict situations and events which go beyond the knowledge of the world and the experiences and expectations of the readers.[19] These narratives construct peculiar storyworlds, which are governed by principles

16 Plato, *Gorgias* 524a.

17 On Rhadamanthys in both *Gorgias* and *True Stories*, see Haller 2014, 33.

18 Alexiou 2002, 100. On Lucian's *True Stories* and other Underworld representations, see also the contribution by Nesselrath in this volume.

19 For an introduction to the studies on unnatural narratives, see Alber et al. 2010, 115: "Scholars working within the tradition of unnatural narrative argue that narratives are interesting

that have little if anything to do with the real world.[20] Therefore, pagan and religious elements can exist in the same place and at the same time; for instance, Kerberos cohabitates with the demons responsible for delivering the souls to Hades,[21] and pagan judges can be accompanied by a Christian emperor (even if somewhat heretical). Similar to religious narratives, the link between the soul and the body is severed because of illness, ecstasy or sleep – Timarion is taken to Hades because of illness. The mechanics of Mazaris' transition are unclear, but he too probably died because of some illness. Unlike Timarion, his description of the travel to the Underworld is quite concise: "I was snatched away at dead of night" (ἁρπαγεὶς οὖν ἀωρὶ νυκτῶν).[22]

Therefore, satirical Underworlds obviously do not meet the Byzantines' possible expectations about the afterlife; rather, they bring together various elements of different traditions (both pagan and Christian, ancient and Byzantine) thus creating and confronting the readers with "bizarre storyworlds."[23] This blend of the pagan netherworld and the Christian hell is reminiscent of what Mikhail Bakhtin describes as a "joyful hell"[24] – a way of presenting the otherworld as one that carnivalizes, that is, presents the world "upside down." As I will show, this is not always the case with the Byzantine satirical hell, where social roles and expectations can be turned upside down, but equally often they can be reinforced, showing that earthly inequalities are retained in the otherworlds. Theoreticians of satire stress that a satirical work should not only comment on and engage in the matters of the world from which it originates, but should also present a vision of a grotesquely transformed world. As Northrop Frye states, "Satire demands at least a token fantasy, a content which the reader recognizes as grotesque, and at least implicit moral standard."[25] A criticism of reality demands a dose of unreality. Such unreality and uncertainty of the (other)world are expressed by the narrators

precisely because they can depict situations and events that move beyond, extend, or challenge our knowledge of the world. According to Jan Alber, narratives 'do not only mimetically reproduce the world as we know it. Many narratives confront us with bizarre story worlds which are governed by principles that have very little to do with the real world around us' […] While the projected worlds may resemble the actual world we live in, they obviously do not have to: they can also confront us with physically or logically impossible scenarios or events."

20 A storyworld is the surrounding context or environment, which embeds existents, their attributes and the actions and events in which they are involved; see Alber et al. 2010, 116.

21 On demons in Byzantium, see Greenfield 1988.

22 *Mazaris* 6.115.

23 Alber et al. 2010, 115.

24 Bakhtin 1984, 158.

25 Frye 1957, 224. For a similar statement, see Hodgart 2010, 12: "All good satire contains an element of aggressive attack and a fantastic vision of the world transformed."

themselves. Timarion is not sure whether what he sees is a dream or not,[26] and Mazaris describes his adventures as a "miraculous event" (τερατευόμενος).[27]

As Frye writes, a descent narrative is the "radical" of satire, "where we enter a lower world which reveals the sources of human absurdity and folly."[28] Satire exposes human vices to the point where they are literarily visible. In the Hades of the *Mazaris*, people are naked, and their sins are marked by the lashes that cover them (ἁπάντων δὲ ὄντων γυμνῶν, τῶν μὲν μώλωψι καταστίκτων καὶ κατ᾽ἐμὲ βεβαπτισμένων ὑπὸ πλήθους ἁμαρτημάτων).[29] This seems to be an allusion to Lucian's *Downward Journey, or: The Tyrant* (Κατάπλους ἢ Τύραννος), where people's evil deeds can be seen as marks on their soul (στίγματα ἐπὶ τῆς ψυχῆς). In the *Timarion,* where people's vices do not seem to influence their post-mortem look, the only difference that singles out the newly deceased is their retention of a little "blush characteristic for life" (τι μικρὸν ἐρυθήματος ζωτικοῦ).[30] On the other hand, Hagiochristophorites' head is split into two parts as a visible sign of the crime he tried to commit:

> *Chrysokrates*: This fellow [Hagiochristophorites] was a soul mate of the old man [Andronikos I] [...]. Andronikos used him as his assistant in his unlawful deeds. [...] And when he sent this chap to one of the magnates, whom he'd always had under suspicion, to do the same to him, the magnate drew his black-edged sword from his sheath and instead of the single head the fellow had had until lately, made him a present of this diptych like one, as you can see.
>
> *Phagakrostichos*: Are you telling me that that accursed fellow is a Hydra, who grows a second head if you cut one off?
>
> *Chrysokrates*: It must have been because of his double nature that he escaped the notice of those in the world above, covering over his bestiality with his court headdress, and only showing his human side.[31]

Hagiochristophorites' dual nature can be seen only in the Underworld, where he can no longer hide the evil (inhuman) side of his character. This satirical

26 *Timarion* 13: ἐμοῦ πρὸς ὀνείροις ἔτι ὄντος· καὶ τὴν φωνὴν ἐπεσχέθην τούτους ἰδὼν καὶ διυπνισθῆναι οὐκ ἴσχυσα. This description echoes the topos of the 'voiceless rhetor', a rhetor who, while travelling, loses the ability to communicate; see Galatariotou 1993, 229.

27 *Mazaris* 4.35.

28 Frye 1976, 120.

29 *Mazaris* 6.116.

30 *Timarion* 21. Perhaps one exception is Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes. However, in his case his looks rather highlight his unhappy fate. See also Krallis 2013, 234–36.

31 *Against Hagiochristophorites* 491.

grotesque, which manifests itself as both aggravation and exaggeration, is quite typical for the depiction of hell. The netherworld is more satirical than epic, and its inhabitants' condition is close to the state of permanent satire.[32] This also means that the world and the society of the dead usually constitute an alternative version of the society in which the satirist lives.[33]

Such alternativity can be built in different ways; for instance, the expectations regarding the world of the dead can be suspended or turned upside down. The most obvious and perhaps most important such example is the pagan element in those narratives,[34] but there are more instances of playing with the expected imagery of the afterlife. In the *Timarion*, Theodore of Smyrna explains to his former student Timarion why pagans (Aiakos, Minos, as well as the famous ancient doctors) have a right to judge Christians:

> And another thing, don't be afraid of the judges because they are pagan. For they are genuinely devoted to justice. It is precisely for that reason that they were elevated to the supreme court. They aren't concerned about religious difference between themselves and the people who come before them. Everyone is allowed to stick to the religion of his choice (ἀνεῖται γὰρ τῷ βουλομένῳ τῆς οἰκείας, ὡς βουλητόν, αἱρέσεως ἔχεσθαι). (*Timarion* 29)

Commenting on this passage, Dimitris Krallis observes that "[r]eligious tolerance was not part of the official Byzantine ideology."[35] Nor is this an attempt at creating a religious utopia. Such religious freedom is rather a part of constructing the storyworld, which is ruled by laws and ideologies that differ from those in the world of the living.

The (un)reality of Byzantine satirical Underworlds can also be at odds with expectations regarding the nature of the afterlife, even the satirical one. Bakhtin claims that according to the carnivalistic logic "the nether world equalizes representatives of all earthly positions in life; there the emperor and the slave, the rich man and the beggar come together on equal terms and enter into familiar contact."[36] However, in the Byzantine satirical Underworld, social disparities do not end; the dead are not equal, and financial standing still matters. In the *Mazaris*, the importance of being rich in the afterlife is expressed

32 Seidel 1979, 35.
33 Thayne 1998, 12.
34 This is what infuriated the later reader of the *Timarion*, Constantine Akropolites; see Treu 1892, 361–65.
35 Krallis 2013, 240.
36 Bakhtin 1984, 132.

openly as Holobolos says to the narrator, "Do you think that filthy paupers like you have the right to show their faces here?."[37] Mazaris can acquire *parrhesia* (freedom of speech)[38] only when he becomes similar to Chremylos – an allusion to Aristophanes' *Ploutos*, where the poor Chremylos, following Apollo's advice, meets and brings home the god of wealth, Ploutos, who turns out to be blind. When Ploutos' eyesight is restored, Chremylos hopes that now the wealth will be distributed not randomly, but among those who deserve it. Perhaps by alluding to this play, Holobolos refers to the same idea that is discussed in the Athenian play – that wealth is distributed randomly, not necessarily justly. In *Against Hagiochristophorites*, it is the new arrival (Hagiochristophorites) who tries to bring earthly customs to the netherworld as he starts demanding overdue tax payments from the dead (ἀπόδος τοιγαροῦν τὸ δημόσιον νόμισμα),[39] which of course enrages the inhabitants of the Underworld.

In the *Timarion*, the social division is based upon different categories. Timarion reports that "The common vulgar masses use wood and coal fires and torches, whereas those who were men of quality on earth have lamps and live their life under brilliant illumination" (Ἔχουσι δὲ χειροποίητα φῶτα, ὁ μὲν ἐκ ξύλων καὶ ἀνθρακιᾶς, ὁ δ᾽ ἐκ κλάδων, ὁ κοινὸς καὶ ἀγοραῖος ὄχλος, ὅσοι δὲ παρὰ τὸν βίον ἐλλόγιμοί ποτε καὶ λαμπρότεροι καὶ λαμπάδας ἀνάπτουσι.)[40] This is perhaps an echo of the Lucianic description of the Moon people, who have artificial genitals – those of the rich made of ivory and those of the poor made of wood (*True Histories* 1.22). The narrator of the *Timarion*, however, makes a distinction not between the poor and the rich, but rather between the uneducated (ὁ κοινὸς καὶ ἀγοραῖος ὄχλος) and the learned (ἐλλόγιμοι). Social inequality is thus both retained and redefined – it still exists, but its source is different since it is knowledge rather that wealth.

However, in some cases, creating the alternative version of the world where the satirist lives means creating a storyworld that is a better version of the world of the living. In all three satires under examination here, the Underworld is a place where (unlike in the world above) courts are just and judges are righteous (if sometimes extravagant, such as Asklepios in the *Timarion*).[41] In the *Timarion*, Theodore of Smyrna assures Timarion that the judges "are genuinely devoted to justice" (λίαν γάρ εἰσι τοῦ δικαίου

37 *Mazaris* 8.5–7.

38 In the English translation *parrhesia* is rendered as "right" and "freedom." Holobolos is, however, more precise. He claims that Mazaris has no "freedom of speech," therefore he is not equal to the other dead.

39 *Against Hagiochristophorites* 81.

40 *Timarion* 16.

41 The court scenes in *Timarion* were analysed in Macrides 2005, 133–45, esp. at 139–41.

περιεχόμενοι).[42] Timarion also witnesses the end of the trial regarding the unjust (ἀδίκως) murder of Caesar by Brutus and Cassius. This might be understood as a satirical take on the slowness of Byzantine (Roman) courts. However, it can equally well be read as yet more proof that the Underworld court deals with this unjust act more efficiently than its earthly counterpart. Similarly, in the satire *Against Hagiochristophorites*, one of the characters, Phagakrostichos tells the anti-hero that his crimes on earth should be enough, because among the dead there is justice (ἅλις σοι τὰ ὑπὲρ γῆς ἀδικοπραγήματα· τὰ δὲ νεκρῶν δικαιότατα).[43] Finally, in the *Mazaris*, the protagonist also learns from Holobolos that the Underworld courts are just:

> – Perhaps you are under the impression, are you, that the judges in Hades mete out justice in the same way as those in the world above?
> – Well, how do they judge in Hades, then?
> – Justly, he said, and impartially, without corruption or favouritism; neither flattery nor bribes can influence them.[44]

The motif of being judged, which is present in all three satires, is an archetypal element appearing in narratives about visits to the Underworld, beginning with the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*.[45] It is the most crucial element of Byzantine otherworldly travels, which, after all, are centred on the issue of being judged according to how a person led his or her life.[46] Trials, courts and judges are symbols that go beyond the simple satirization of the Byzantine judiciary system; at the same time, they do reflect, at least to some extent, earthly reality and Byzantine problems with courts. In the *Mazaris*, Holobolos formulates the entire list of accusations against the earthly judges:

> They let themselves be carried away by favour (πρὸς χάριν) as well as flattery and they accept bribes from both parties in a suit; for when justice is gone, the right is on the side of the influential and those who

42 *Timarion* 29.
43 *Against Hagiochristophorites* 102–3.
44 *Mazaris* 16.25–31.
45 Frye 1976, 81.
46 A peculiar feature of Byzantine unofficial theology were the so-called *telonia*, that is tollgates of the air. See Every 1976, 139–51; Constas 2001, 91–124; more recently Dirkse 2014, 41–53.

> pay better, or rather of the extremely mighty, the vastly powerful and the excessively wealthy.[47]

Exactly the same accusations against judges can be found in Late Antique texts onwards;[48] John Chrysostomos provides a similar list.[49] Corruption and partiality (the phrase πρὸς χάριν is listed time and again) are undoubtedly problems of the Byzantine legal system.[50] Just and impartial otherworldly courts indeed constitute an alternative and a better version of the Byzantine reality.

Two of our *katabaseis* end with the *anabaseis* of their respective heroes. Timarion goes away a free man – or rather, alive. Mazaris flees from Hades. Hagiochristophorites – the only truly dead character – stays in Hades, where Rhadamanthys promises the dead that he will suffer together with his partner in crime, Emperor Andronikos I. *Mazaris* is the only Byzantine satire provided with a text that could be described as a commentary on the work. As mentioned above, the Berlin manuscript transmits the dedication to the Despot of Morea, Theodor II: "At the behest of Your Highness, Noblest of Despots, I have written this to the best of my ability, more in a playful vein than with a serious purpose" (Τῇ τοῦ σοῦ κράτους προστάξει, γενναιότατε δεσποτῶν, παίζων γε μᾶλλον ἢ σπουδάζων ὡς οἷόν τε ταυτὶ γέγραφα).[51] This authorial and paratextual comment establishes the playful and satirical purpose of the text. While discussing his own satirical compositions, the twelfth-century author Nikephoros Basilakes refers to Solon's playful poetry in a similar manner: "in this way, Solon, when he was young, composed poetry more in jest than with a serious purpose" (οὕτω καὶ Σόλων ἔτι νεάζων ποιήσει ἐδεδώκει μᾶλλον παίζων ἢ σπουδάζ ων).[52] Nonetheless, Mazaris – in his capacity of narrator – ends his story with

47 *Mazaris* 18.4–8.

48 Hahn 1982, 187–89.

49 John Chrysostomos, *De decem millium talentorum debitore* (*Patrologia Graeca* 51): Οὐ πλούσιοι δὲ καὶ πένητες μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄρχοντες καὶ δικασταὶ μετὰ πολλῆς ἐξετάζονται τῆς ἀκριβείας, εἰ μὴ διέφθειραν τὸ δίκαιον, εἰ μὴ πρὸς χάριν, εἰ μὴ πρὸς ἀπέχθειαν ἐψηφίσαντο τοῖς δικαζομένοις, εἰ μὴ κολακευθέντες ἔδωκαν παρὰ τὸ δέον τὴν ψῆφον, εἰ μὴ μνησικακοῦντες ἐπηρέασαν τοῖς οὐδὲν ἠδικηκόσιν.

50 Saradi 1995, 165–204. Perhaps Byzantine courts are also satirized in Theodore Prodromos' *Bion Prasis*, where the Roman lawgiver Pomponius gives a long speech on how to be successful in the court (*Bion Prasis* 122–23). On this passage, see also Sanfilippo 1951–1953, 99–110.

51 *Mazaris* 98.1–2.

52 Nikephoros Basilakes, *Prol.* 4.15 (Garzya).

an opposite statement: “This, gentlemen, is my account – a tearful rather than a cheerful one – of my involuntary trip, which I have described to the best of my ability, for amusement or as a lesson, more in earnest than in jest.” (Ταῦτ’ ἀντὶ δακρύων μᾶλλον, ὦ παρόντες, ἢ γέλωτος, ὡς οἷόν τε, ἁρπαγεὶς παιδιᾶς χάριν ἢ παιδείας γέγραφα, σπουδάζων μᾶλλον ἢ παίζων.)[53]

These two seemingly contradictory statements show what satire really is – it “claims that nothing truly is what it claims to be, even satire itself.”[54] Each text examined here proposes a subversive vision of the afterlife and is, in fact, something else than it appears to be. Under the guise of a fantastic, unreal narrative, each text tells the story – which is firmly rooted in the Byzantine reality – of the world as it should be or perhaps as its author wanted it to be, where courts are just and criminals are called to justice even after death. All three texts (but perhaps in particular the *Timarion* and the *Mazaris*) are what Bakhtin calls Menippean satire (*menippea*).[55] According to Bakhtin, “[a] very important characteristic of the *menippea* is the organic combination within it of the free fantastic, the symbolic, at times even a mystical-religious element with an extreme and (from our point of view) crude slum naturalism.”[56] Byzantine satirical voyages to the Underworld bring together elements of ancient mythology (Hades, ancient judges and Kerberos), Christianity (mechanics of otherworldly travels) and naturalism. Gluttony and earthly food are what the dead miss the most; *Mazaris’* Hades is just full of mean people who like insulting one another.[57] At the same time, these texts tackle much more important issues of social justice, political, literary or even philosophical matters. In this sense they are true heirs to the Lucianic Underworld.

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53 *Mazaris* 60.20–22. I have modified the original translation, which renders the phrase παιδιᾶς χάριν ἢ παιδείας as “perhaps as a hoax, perhaps as a moral lesson.”

54 Thayne 1998, 27.

55 On Menippean satire, see Relihan 1993 and Weinbrot 2005. See also the contribution by Nesselrath in this volume.

56 Bakhtin 1984, 132.

57 Garland 2007, 196–201.

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CHAPTER 18

Many (Un)Happy Returns

Ancient Greek Concepts of a Return from Death and Their Later Counterparts

Sarah Iles Johnston

We hear a great deal, both from ancient sources and from contemporary scholars, about the journey into death as the ancient Greeks imagined it.* The newly disembodied soul was expected to meet Charon, the ferryman who would carry it across the river that separated the land of the living from the land of the dead. It would see Kerberos, a three-headed (or according to other reports, a 100-headed) dog that guarded the entrance to the palace of Hades and Persephone, the gods who ruled over the dead. Confusing roads that might lure the unwary soul into dangerous parts of the Underworld wove through a landscape dotted with cypress trees, asphodel, and springs of water that could erase all memories from the thirsty souls who drank there. For the well-prepared or lucky soul, there was a place of continuous sunlight where they might spend eternity eating, drinking and engaging in pleasant pursuits. For those who were not so well-prepared or lucky, there were dank, muddy places of punishment or, at best, boredom.[1]

We hear much less about how the Greeks imagined one coming *back* from death. I do not mean coming back as a ghost – a disembodied soul that had somehow escaped from Hades' realm – but rather back in the absolute sense, as a fully re-incorporated person, as what is often called a *revenant*, literally, 'one who has returned'. What we do hear about revenants comes from myths, the narrative form that is so often used, in so many cultures, to explore the ramifications of what seem to be desirable, yet impossible, goals. In this essay, I will look closely at those myths, asking what they can tell us about Greek ideas of life and death, and why the Greeks liked to entertain certain variations of a possible return from death, but not others.

* I am grateful to audiences at McGill University, Bryn Mawr College and Uppsala Universitet for their helpful comments following oral versions of this paper. A version of this paper has appeared in the electronic volume arising from the conference at McGill at which it was first presented: *Coming Back to Life: The Permeability of Past and Present, Mortality and Immortality, Death and Life in the Ancient Mediterranean* (eds. F. S. Tappenden and C. Daniel-Hughes; Montreal, QC: McGill University Library and Archives, 2016: comingbacktolife.mcgill.ca). I thank the press, and the editors, Fred Tappenen and Carly Daniel-Hughes, for permitting its republication here.

1 Johnston 1999, 14–16; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 103–7.

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I will proceed as follows. First, I will survey the Greek stories we have about a bodily return to life after death and offer some observations about them. Second, I will look at stories about revenants from another culture – namely our own Western culture – and draw some conclusions about them. As we will see, there is quite a contrast between the two sets of stories. Third, I will suggest two reasons for this contrast – two factors that may have predisposed modern Western peoples to think differently about the possible return of the dead from the way that the ancient Greeks did. My suggestions are hypothetical, and like all hypotheses, they are provisional, intended to provoke thought rather than to provide absolute answers.

Greek Stories About the Bodily Return of the Dead

My dossier for this topic includes 13 stories. Let us start with the one for which we have the oldest evidence: the tale of Sisyphos. Sisyphos first evaded Death by managing to chain him up and then, after Death had been released and duly came to claim him, Sisyphos found a clever way to exploit an existential loophole and return again to the upper world: namely, before he died, he instructed his wife not to give him burial rites, which stranded him between the upper and lower worlds – a pitiable state. He then prevailed upon Persephone to allow him to return home to ask his wife to perform those rites. Of course, once there, he refused to return to the Underworld and lived above for quite a while longer.[2]

An even more famous Greek myth about an attempted return to life involves the singer Orpheus, who travelled to the Underworld to recover his wife. Orpheus used his talents as a musician to persuade Persephone to allow him to lead his wife back to the upper world. Although there may have been an early version of the story in which he succeeded in this task, in all extant versions, Orpheus failed. His wife slipped away from him at the last moment because Orpheus violated Persephone's stipulation that he not look back at her until they reached the upper world. Plunged into an even deeper grief than

2 Alkman, fr. 38 Lobel and Page 1995; Theognis 702–12; Pherekydes, *FGrHist* 3 F119; see Fowler 2013, 52; Gantz 1993, 173–76. For all of the myths I discuss in this paper, I offer a few of the earliest sources and references to either or both of two good scholarly works on early Greek mythography (Fowler 2013 and Gantz 1993) where more early sources can be found. I do not usually cite later sources; references to them can often be found in Gantz's treatments of the myths, and also in any number of scholarly works such as *The New Pauly Encyclopedia of the Ancient World*.

before, Orpheus refused to remarry, and eventually was murdered by a group of women whose attentions he spurned.[3]

The general pattern behind Orpheus' story is also found in that of Protesilaos and his wife, whose name is sometimes given as Laodamia. After only one day of marriage, Protesilaos joined the Greek expedition to Troy and was killed as soon as he leapt off the ship. The gods took pity on the despairing Laodamia and allowed Protesilaos to return to the upper world for a single day, in order to bid her farewell. Upon her husband's second death, however, Laodamia plunged into even greater despair, which drove her to commission a statue of her husband that she could take to bed with her. Upon discovering what she was doing, Laodamia's father had the image destroyed, and Laodamia killed herself.[4]

Similar in some ways to the story of Protesilaos is that of Iolaus, the nephew of Herakles, who was brought back to life by the gods in order that he might help Herakles' children win their battle against Eurystheus, and then, the battle having been won, died again.[5]

In all four of the stories that we have looked at so far, the return to life is represented as a favor that the gods can freely bestow upon mortals when they choose to. The next case takes us in a different direction. Asklepios eventually honed his medical skills to the point that he could raise the dead, and did so on several occasions. Zeus put a stop to this by striking Asklepios with a lightning bolt. In most versions of the story, no reason is given for Zeus' action, but according to Diodoros of Sicily, Hades asked Zeus to do it because the lower world was losing citizens.[6]

Here, for the first time in our dossier, we have a mortal succeeding at what only gods otherwise could do: raising the dead. That Asklepios was a *physician* makes a certain sense in that regard – I will return to that point. But let us note, for now, that it is the gods who put Death back into business for reasons of their own. The same idea plays out in the earlier part of Sisyphos' story: Sisyphos initially thwarts Death by chaining him up, and Death must be released from his bonds by Ares. We should also note that, as in the cases of Orpheus and

3 Ps.-Eratosthenes, *Katasterismoi* 24; Euripides, *Alkestis* 357–62; Plato, *Symposium* 179b–d; Moschos, *Epitaphios Bionos* 3.123–24; Konon, *FGrHist* 26 F1.45; see Gantz 1993, 721–25; Graf 1987.

4 Homer, *Iliad* 2.698–702; Proklos, *Kypria* arg. 10 West 2003; *Kypria* fr. 22 West 2003; Ovid, *Heroides* 13; Apollodoros, *Bibliotheka Epitome* 3.29–30; Hyginus, *Fabulae* 104; see Gantz 1993, 592–94.

5 Scholiast on Pindar, *Pythian* 9.137. Euripides, *Herakleidae* 799–866 has him rejuvenated by the Dioskouroi rather than resurrected, perhaps, conjectures Gantz 1993, 464–66, because the original story was too incredible.

6 Hesiod, fr. 51 Merkelbach and West 1967; Stesichoros, 194 Page 1962; Akusilaos, *FGrHist* 2 F18; Pherekydes, *FGrHist* 3 F35; Pindar, *Pythian* 3.55–58; see Fowler 2013, 74; Gantz 1993, 91–92.

Laodamia, the mortal who sought to reverse death (Asklepios) ends up the worse off for it himself.

My sixth case is Alkestis. When it was time for her husband, Admetos, to die, Admetos' friend Apollo intervened and got the Fates to agree that, if someone else volunteered to die in his place, Admetos would be spared (here again, we see the intervention of a god in matters of life and death, and again for purely personal reasons). The only person who volunteered to die for Admetos, however, was Alkestis, and die she did. On the day of her funeral, Herakles dropped by for a visit, and when he heard what had happened, set out for the cemetery, confronted Death as he came to claim Alkestis, and beat Death in a wrestling match. Herakles then led Alkestis back to her husband.[7] As in the second part of Sisyphos' story, victory was complete; both Alkestis and Admetos lived on to ripe old ages. As in the first part of Sisyphos' story, Death was conquered by a mortal, using physical means – although there is also a version of the story, passed down by Plato, in which either Persephone or all the gods, admiring Alkestis' courage, freely decided to send her back to the world of the living.[8] This version aligns with the other cases we have looked at, in which the gods decide which mortals merit a return to life.

As a final case in this section of my dossier I offer Pelops, who was chopped up into a stew by his father, Tantalos. The goddess Rhea (or in another version of the story, Klotho, one of the Fates) reassembled Pelops' dismembered pieces and then brought him back to life.[9] As in the other cases we have looked at so far, it is a god, or gods, who bring about the resurrection, and as in the case of Alkestis, the story seems to have had a happy ending, at least in the short term – the renewed Pelops married a princess, won a kingdom and sired children.

Let us move on now to three more cases that share a different twist: namely that the revivified individual not only returns to life, but also enters into a new, divine state. Semele perished in flames when Zeus revealed himself to her in all of his divine glory, but after her son Dionysos grew up, he journeyed to the Underworld and convinced Hades and Persephone to release Semele's soul. Dionysos thereupon led his mother up not only to the world of the living but to the very heavens, where she joined the company of the gods.[10] Sometimes it was said that she took on a new name at that time, Thyone.[11] Similarly, Artemis

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7 Phrynichos, fr. 3 Snell 1971; Euripides, *Alkestis*; see Fowler 2013, 75; Gantz 1993, 195–97.

8 Plato, *Symposium* 179b; cf. Apollodoros, *Bibliotheke* Epit. 1.9.15.

9 Pindar, *Olympian* 1.25–27; Bakchylides, fr. 42 Snell and Maehler 1970; see Gantz 1993, 531–534; cf. Graf and Johnston 2013, 75–76.

10 *TGF* 22F3 (= Iophon fr. 3 in older editions); see Gantz 1993, 472–79; cf. Graf and Johnston 2013, 73–74.

11 Diodoros of Sicily 4.25.4.

revived, or asked Asklepios to revive, her dead devotee Hippolytus, and then renamed him Virbius and established him as a god to whom cult was paid.[12] And finally, Eos convinced Zeus to bestow immortality upon her dead son, Memnon.[13]

All three of these stories represent an escape from death, won by the favor of a god – but they include a simultaneous promotion to godhood for the formerly deceased as well, and sometimes also include what amounts to a change of identity. They differ, then, from our seven other stories, in which the deceased individuals resumed existence in exactly the existential form that they had previously enjoyed.

Our final two cases are only partial returns to life. First there is Castor, the mortal twin of an immortal brother, Polydeuces. When Castor died, Polydeuces asked Zeus to restore him to life and Zeus made them a deal: each of the brothers would be dead half of the time and alive half of the time.[14] In other words, the story of Castor and Polydeuces again presents a situation in which a member of the dead returns to life at the request of a loved one, through the intervention of a god. Finally, there is the Argonaut Aithalides, who was granted by his father Hermes the boon of spending half his time after death above on earth, and half below – much like Castor.[15]

There is one more case – although I have kept it separate from our main corpus because our sources for it are much later than those for the other stories we have looked at, although the events themselves are said to have occurred during the reign of Philip of Macedon, in the mid-fourth century BCE. The second-century CE author Phlegon of Tralles, and more briefly the fifth-century Neoplatonist Proklos,[16] each tell of how a young man, Machates, who is a guest in a wealthy household, is visited two nights in a row by a young girl who calls herself Philinnion. After making love to him each night, Philinnion leaves behind jewelry and pieces of clothing, as tokens of her affection. Upon seeing the tokens, the young man's hosts

12 Gantz 1993, 285–88; *Naupaktia* fr. 10 *PEG*; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.497–546.

13 Proklos, *Aithiopis* arg. 2 West 2003; see Gantz 1993, 37.

14 Homer, *Odyssey* 11.298–304; *Kypria* fr. 9; Pindar, *Nemean* 10.55–59; see Fowler 2013, 423–34; Gantz 1993, 318–28.

15 Pherekydes, *FGrHist* 3 F109; cf. Apollonios Rhodios 1.640–48; see Gantz 1993, 343.

16 Phlegon, *Mirabilia* 2.1 (and see commentary in Hansen 1996); Proklos, *In Rem Publicam* II.115–16 (most easily available in English as Appendix 1 of Hansen 1996). Proklos mentions three other cases of the dead returning to life from approximately his own period (5th c. CE). None of these three people threatens the living; indeed, they offer help of various kinds.

realize that this visitor is none other than their deceased daughter, who had died a newlywed bride. The parents confront her on her third visit and she cries out that they have ruined everything – if her visits had continued undisturbed for three nights, then by the will of the chthonian gods she would have returned permanently to life, but now, instead, she will return whence she has come. So far, this sounds like a variation of the Orpheus story but the final part takes us in a new direction: the local seer commands the parents to disinter their daughter's body, burn it outside the city, make offerings to Hermes Chthonios, the Erinyes, and Ares, and then purify themselves and the local temples. Here perhaps, for the first time, we seem to see some fear of the returning dead – or at least a strong desire to ensure that she stays where she belongs, once she has again retreated to the Underworld. Machates, by the way, kills himself in despair, much as Orpheus did.

We can divide the stories we have looked at into three types: those in which the return of the dead is wholly successful (Alkestis, Pelops, Iolaos); those in which the return of the dead is successful but those who initiate it are punished by the gods (Sisyphos and Asklepios); and those in which the dead fail to fully return and it is the failure itself that has dire consequences for those who initiate it (Orpheus and Laodamia). Of our remaining cases, Semele, Hippolytos and Memnon belong in their own category, since they all become divine. As for Castor, although *we* might argue that the return of Castor had dire consequences for Polydeuces, insofar as he loses half his immortality, the myth does not present the situation that way; Castor's story probably belongs, therefore, in the same category as those of Alkestis, Pelops and Iolaos, as does that of Aithalides. The story of Machates and Philinnion belongs, as I noted, in more-or-less the same category as the stories of Orpheus and Laodamia; it differs from the others insofar as Machates did not initiate the return of Philinnion.

Notably, none of these stories implies that returning from the dead is in and of itself a problem – it is a special dispensation that a god might bestow, or that a particularly clever mortal might devise. Nor are the returning dead *themselves* presented as problems in these stories, with the possible exception of Philinnion. The problems, when there are problems, arise either from angering a god, as in the cases of Asklepios and Sisyphos, or from having failed to accept limitations set by the gods, as in the cases of Orpheus, Laodamia and Philinnion. If the Greeks feared the return of the dead in and of itself, it was the return of the dead in the form of the restless, disembodied souls that I mentioned earlier, or in other words, ghosts – not the possibility that the dead might return in embodied form.

Modern Stories of the Returning Dead

The stories told about the return of the dead in the modern west are quite different. (In the confines of this essay I will discuss examples drawn primarily from the Anglophone world, although instances could be drawn from other Western cultures as well.)

In 1902, W. W. Jacobs published a short story called "The Monkey's Paw."[17] The title refers to a mummified monkey's paw that a soldier has brought home from India, a talisman that can grant its owner three wishes. Having experienced its dangerous powers himself and wishing to destroy it, the soldier, nonetheless, reluctantly gives it to an older couple who are his friends. Their initial wish is for 200 pounds to pay off their mortgage. The next day, their son is killed in a horrible accident at the factory where he works; the compensation that they are paid for his death is exactly 200 pounds. Ten more days go by and the mother, overwhelmed by grief, snatches up the paw and makes a second wish – that her son come home. Immediately, there comes a knocking at the door. As the mother joyously fumbles to open it, the father – who had been the one to identify his son's badly mutilated body at the morgue – quickly picks up the claw and makes a wish of his own. When the door swings open, nothing is there but the wind, whistling through the empty street.

"The Monkey's Paw" was an enormous success. A year after its publication, it was adapted for the London stage,[18] and there have been many radio, film and TV versions as well. Stephen King used the idea that underlies it in several of his novels, most prominently *Pet Sematary* (1983), in which a young doctor uses the power of an ancient Indian burial ground to resurrect, first, his daughter's cat and then his two-year-old son. As in all tales of "The Monkey's Paw" type, the doctor learns, to his regret, that as another character had warned him, "sometimes dead is better." In *Pet Sematary,* those who return carry a lingering stench of the grave and also, far more alarmingly, a vicious spirit called the wendigo. Indeed, although the *body* that returns may be that of a cat or a child, the soul and intelligence that animate it are purely evil.

Similarly, in C. S. Lewis' 1945 novel *That Hideous Strength*, a team of scientists who are bent on taking over the world think they have reanimated the head of a recently executed convict–a brilliant but criminally insane man who will lead them in their endeavors. Bad as that sounds, it gets worse: as it turns out, the head is no longer inhabited by the soul and mind of the convict. It

17 The story appeared in Jacobs' anthology *The Lady of the Barge,* published by Dodd, Mead and Co.

18 "The Monkey's Paw: A Story in Three Scenes", co-written by Jacobs and Louis N. Parker.

has been possessed by an evil force that has its own colonizing plans, which extend to the whole universe. In *Solaris*, a 1961 novel by Stanislaw Lem, which has been made into a movie three times (1968, 1972 and 2002), a team of scientists sent to investigate a distant planet are apparently visited by loved ones they left behind on earth – including, for the main character Kris, his dead wife Rheya, who committed suicide after Kris told her he was leaving. Rheya is willing to let by-gones be by-gones and resume their marriage. Although drawn to her by a combination of guilt and desire, Kris is more alert to danger than are the protagonists in other "Monkey's-Paw" type stories and initially resists temptation.

The original novel and two of the film versions end with Rheya helping the scientists find a way to end her new existence, which has become as unhappy for her as her first life was. The end of the third, most recent, film is ambiguous; we could understand Kris as choosing to stay with the new Rheya, although in an altered bodily state himself. In any case, all versions of Lem's story bring us up against the central issue of "The Monkey's Paw," and ask us to consider, once again, whether staying dead might be better – better for those who have died and also for those who are left behind.

We could go on at great length with this catalog of twentieth century stories that center on the bodily return of the dead, and the disasters that follow – a whole lecture could be devoted to H. P. Lovecraft's treatments of the idea, and particularly his stories of "Herbert West: Reanimator" (1922), in which a young medical student's attempts to reanimate the dead prompt decaying corpses – or parts of corpses – to violently attack the living. But let us pause, instead, and consider what we can take away from these stories and many others like them, as we did for the ancient myths:

First, modern stories are never of the Alkestis type – that is, the return of the dead does *not* end happily. At the very least, as in some versions of *Solaris*, resurrected individuals long to die once more, and sometimes they take loved ones along with them. They follow the Orpheus paradigm, in other words. Overall, moreover, far from implying that the return of the dead might be a special dispensation granted now and then to favorite mortals, modern tales almost always make it clear that such a thing is against the laws of God, Fate, Nature or all three. Life may be better than death, but in these stories, death is always better than anything that lies between the two.

Second, many of these stories offer lavish descriptions of the reanimated body's decaying state: in King's *Pet Sematary*, as I noted, those who return from the dead carry a whiff of the grave and the marks of their wounds. The reanimated head in Lewis' novel must be artificially supplied with saliva before it can talk, and then it drools disgustingly into its own beard. The father makes

his last wish on the monkey's paw because he realizes how gruesome a sight his son's reanimated corpse will present when his wife opens the door. "Herbert West: Reanimator," is filled with adjectives such as "ghastly," or "hideous." In the modern west, the returning dead are expected to be vile.

Third, in many modern stories, the corpse is reanimated not by its own soul but by a force of evil – a wendigo, a colonizing space alien, or some more vaguely identified but still horrible force. Sometimes it *is* the original soul who repopulates the corpse, but with a temperament that has changed for the worse and a hunger for living flesh. What remains of one of Herbert West's experiments, who in life was the beloved dean of the medical school, is described as "strewing red death in its wake."

Christianity's Contributions

So, why are the two groups of stories so different? Why did ancient Greeks express anxiety about the return of the *soul* – that is, the ghost – but not about the *bodily* return of the dead, whereas modern Western culture, although certainly not immune from fear of ghosts, seems obsessed with the horror and danger of the reanimated corpse? We might guess that it has something to do with the advancement of technology; we might conjecture that the potential to restore bodily life seems closer to realization now than it ever did before, and that stories such as those I sketched in part 2 are a medium through which we can think about the ramifications of that possibility. The fact that doctors and scientists are very often the re-animators in modern stories – in *Pet Sematary*, in *That Hideous Strength,* in *Solaris*, and in "Herbert West," for example – would seem to support this. But there is a flaw in this analysis: Asklepios, after all, was a doctor. The Greeks were also capable of using stories about the return of the dead to think about the ramifications of advancing technology, and yet they never presented the reanimated corpse *itself* as being any problem.

I suggest that there is another, and much older, reason that contemporary Western culture fears the bodily return of the dead, namely, Christianity and its enduring effect upon even secular representations of death in the West. Christianity is a religion anchored in the promise that a human once rose from the dead and that those who believe in him will rise from the dead as well. One of the passages most central to those claims is 1 Corinthians 15.21–54 in which Paul, discussing the resurrection of the dead, promises that when "the last trumpet sounds" the "dead shall rise again incorruptible. […] For this corruptible body – must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on

immortality." In short, Paul promises that like Christ, we will trade the bodies in which we die for some better version of those bodies.

Central to this passage, and to the ardent debates that went on about it for more than 13 centuries amongst clerics and scholars, is the question of *how* the dead rise. As Caroline Walker Bynum showed at length, there was a deep, abiding desire that one's personal, individual body be restored when the last trump sounded, even down to its moles and warts. This meant that the particles of each body had to reassemble themselves *exactly* into that same body upon resurrection. That is, *Peter's* body couldn't be allowed to include disintegrated particles of *Paul's* body (as the medieval debaters put it). How did God deal with all of this? What about people who had been eaten by cannibals? How did God straighten out *those* two bodies at resurrection?[19]

The history of these debates is fascinating – nor did they stop with the end point of Bynum's book, the year 1336, which simply represents the moment when Pope Benedict the Twelfth formally declared that souls will experience beatific vision at resurrection – that is, that souls will indeed have eyes. Martin Luther certainly had something to say on the topic – that is, he supported the ideas of a unified self and bodily resurrection – and bodily resurrection is still doctrine not only in the contemporary Catholic Church but also in most forms of Protestantism.

For our purposes, two overall points that emerge from Bynum's book are important. First, that early on, Christians developed a *unified* concept of the self, which valued both body and soul – indeed, they assumed that neither part of this self could be resurrected without the other and therefore that without the resurrection of the body, the self could not be resurrected at all. I doubt that a truly dualist concept of the self is found anywhere outside of certain philosophical systems such as Platonism, but some peoples, including the ancient Greeks, have a modified form of it, according to which it is the soul that survives death and goes on to some sort of existence afterwards even as the body rots, yet it is a soul that has *somatomorphic* qualities.[20] That is, the soul carries along with it into the afterlife certain characteristics of embodiment, such as potential sensation and individualized appearance. This is why Odysseus is able to recognize his dead friends and relatives in the *Nekyia* of Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, and why souls are able to suffer pain and enjoy pleasures in the Greek afterlife.

The second overall point is that, although Christianity insisted on the eventual bodily resurrection of every person, it acknowledged the initial

19 Bynum 1994, esp. 33.

20 I borrow the term *somatomorphic* from Bynum 1994, ch. 7.

corruption and decay of the body. Indeed, Christianity both reviled and reveled in that decay: the rot and disarticulation of the body that followed death were understood as necessary steps on the way to eventual resurrection, but as *only* steps, and therefore as signs that the process was underway but not yet complete. This sentiment that decay is an undesirable and yet crucial stage in the perfecting of the self underlies two fearsome creatures who begin to appear in reports and stories during the Middle Ages: one is the revenant whose body has begun the process of decay but has not yet *finished* it, who reappears amongst the living in a ghastly physical form. In other words, the reanimated corpse. Nancy Caciola's study of such medieval revenants shows that they were traced to one of two causes.[21] Theologians and scholars argued that it was demons who animated the rotting corpses, while the common people tended to believe it was the souls themselves, bent on returning to their former homes. Either way, such a creature was big trouble, doing such things as raping virgins and murdering people. In other words, the medieval reanimated corpse is an ancestor of the modern Western phenomena I talked about earlier.

The other fearsome creature is the revenant whose body does not decay at all, and who does not, therefore, even enter into the process that eventually leads to resurrection. Here, too, either the lingering soul or a demonic force is understood to animate the corpse – leading eventually to belief in what becomes known as, among other terms, the 'vampire'. Notably, nothing like the vampire – that is, a dead person who returns to attack upon the living – appears in Greek sources until well after Christianization. Our first discussion of such a creature is found in Leo Allatius' 1645 treatise on what were then contemporary Greek beliefs (*De Graecorum hodie quorundam opinationibus*).[22] Allatius, a Greek from Chios who was trained in Classical literature, theology and medicine, calls them *vrykolakes* – a Slavic term that means 'werewolves', although 'werewolf' for the Slavs meant not the sort of creature that we think of, who transforms from human to wolf and back again, but rather a nasty revenant, who returns from the grave to wreak havoc.

In other words, when threatening revenants finally enter our record of Greek beliefs, they do so under a borrowed name, perhaps implying that the belief was borrowed as well – although how much earlier than Leo Allatius' account that borrowing occurred is impossible to say. What might have laid the groundwork for it? One possible answer is the Greek Orthodox practice of exhuming the deceased after three years and giving him or her a secondary

21 Caciola 1996; cf. Caciola 2014.

22 On Allatius' treatise, see now Hartnup 2004, esp. chs 7 and 8.

burial, a practice mentioned by Allatius that is still alive in many parts of Greece today.[23] Although normally when a grave was reopened only bones would be found, occasionally (for what are now well-understood biological reasons having to do with the acidity of the soil and similar variables) a body would be mummified, saponified (that is, turned into a soap-like substance that preserves the features remarkably well) or tympanated (that is, inflated by interior gases into a tight, drum-like state) all of which states understandably lead to the belief that the dead was not completely dead.[24]

Conclusions and Suggestions

I have discussed several ideas in this essay. First: Western culture, under the enduring influence of Christianity and its promise of eventual bodily resurrection, developed a stronger aversion to the corpse than had many pre-Christian Mediterranean cultures, because the corpse – which by definition is a dead body in some state of decay, greater or lesser – signified that the process of decomposition that preceded the creation of a second, more spiritual body that awaited resurrection was not yet complete. A rotting corpse that was *reanimated* signified that either the original soul or a demon had improperly taken possession of it – thus interrupting the process of dissolution, reconstruction and resurrection, either temporarily or permanently. Given that such a thing was against God's plan for the resurrection of all individuals, the reanimated corpse could only be understood as evil.[25]

The pre-Christian Greeks, in contrast, located the enduring self in the soul; it was in the soul that the self would experience any post-mortem existence, good or bad. The corpse, although avoided by the living as a source of contact pollution, was not understood to have the potential for a continuing relationship with the soul that formerly inhabited it, once the corpse had been properly disposed of. The soul endured, experiencing whatever rewards or punishments the self had earned while alive.

Interestingly, this idea that the body and the soul were severed from one another after death left open the possibility of imagining the rare bodily return

23 Danforth 1982.

24 Barber 1988, 102–32.

25 Caciola 2014 collects some fascinating exceptions to this, in which the returning dead seem, at least at first glance, to be innocent and even pious in their behavior. However, as Caciola shows, these stories have been appropriated, altered and repurposed by Christian narrators intent on turning traditional tales of frightening revenants into proofs of the resurrection promised by Christianity.

to life in almost any way, including a positive one – as being a boon from the gods, for example. No stigma seems to have been attached to such a possibility precisely because no post-mortem relationship between the body and the soul had ever been conceptualized, much less regularized, as it was in early Christianity. Certainly, everyday expectations were confounded when, in myths, the dead rejoined the living, but no *horror* was attached to the idea of a bodily return in those myths. We should note, indeed, one more thing about the myths that we examined: they are so little concerned with the issue of the corpse that they fail to say anything at all about the body in which the returning dead makes its appearance. Apparently, it looks just like the body did before the person had died – Admetos can recognize Alkestis, for instance. This contrasts strongly with later tales of revenants, where the body is vile in appearance, smell or both, and does not always function correctly.

Of course, were this essay a longer one, in which we could take a more expansive look at both ancient and modern Western cultures, we would surely discover that some ancient cultures proposed a stronger, more enduring link between the soul and the body than the Greeks did – the Egyptians would seem to be an obvious example, given the care they took to preserve the bodies of their deceased. We might also discover that some modern Western cultures are relatively disinterested in horrifying tales of the returning corpse – although my own, very informal, survey of French, German and Scandinavian cultures suggests that they are just as fascinated with the idea as are the Anglophone cultures on which I have focused here. There are also cultures that have developed strong beliefs in the threatening return of the corpse under little or no influence from Christianity. The African religious tradition that originally produced the concept of what we now call a zombie is an example. The medieval Christian idea of the reanimated corpse was particularly apropos for *this* essay because of its historical situation – it lies between the ancient Greek model of death, with which we know it perforce interacted, and the modern Western models that I used as contrast for the Greek model, reacting against the one and influencing the other – but it is not the only one.

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CHAPTER 19

Epilogue

Below the Tree of Life

Eric Cullhed and Sigrid Schottenius Cullhed

Why did the Greeks keep embarking on round trips to Hades? Let us add one final example before we turn to this question.

> A man is chased by a ferocious elephant. He sees a dried up well, overgrown with vegetation and the long roots of a tree. In order to escape he grabs onto those roots and glides down into the well. Suspended halfway down he notices an enormous snake at the bottom of the well, waiting to devour him. Then he sees two rats, one black and the other white, gnawing at the roots. Four cobras approach him from the sides. Above his head there is a beehive. A few drops of honey trickle into his mouth as the bees start stinging him.

The originally Buddhist parable of "The Man in the Well" and its meditation on the human condition has had a global impact paralleled by few other stories, reaching and resonating with countless minds all over the world regardless of creed or culture. During the Middle Ages it travelled through images and texts from India all the way to Japan in the East and France in the West. Details changed along the way. The descent into the well could be replaced with a climb up a tree or a fall off a cliff; the elephant with a unicorn or a tiger; the snake with a monstrous dragon; the cobras with jackals; the honey with *manna* or a wild strawberry. The exact interpretation of the individual symbols also varied, but the meaning was usually more or less the same: we cling to our irreversibly dissipating lives, suffering and fearing the end that awaits us, but strangely we still find it meaningful to pursue sensual pleasures.[1]

The function is obviously protreptic. But what conclusion are we supposed to draw? As in a static image the man hangs perpetually from his branch. Without an appended exegesis the story is as endless as it is open-ended. For this reason it could move with ease not only between visual and verbal media but also over religious boundaries. It served to persuade readers about the necessity to break free from *Saṃsāra*, or – in the Muslim and Christian versions – to care

1 For a rich survey of the fortunes of this parable, see Zin 2011.

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less about the worldly pleasures and more about their salvation. But where is salvation to be found in this image? All paths are blocked by creatures that will inevitably trample, poison or devour the protagonist. Entering American popular culture via modern Zen Buddhism, the parable was quite naturally reinterpreted as a loud 'seize the day!' Enjoy the honey while it lasts, for it is all you have.[2]

Yes, the story persuades but it also explains and defines. If offers an experiential definition of the abstract notion of 'life', positing that *life is an arduous struggle to postpone certain death while experiencing some pleasure but mostly fear and pain.* Parables of this sort are typical instances of cognitive allegory.[3] They draw on the cognitive resources of analogy plus narrative by stringing together and extending basic conceptual metaphors – common mappings of abstract notions on to more concrete objects and their interactions.[4] The Man in the Well extends the analogic frame Life is Up/Death is Down, and more specifically Life is Being Suspended. Such conceptual metaphors are formed by consistent correlations in real-world embodied experience, and it is easy to see how human beings will naturally come to associate survival with 'not falling' and 'clinging'. Already as infants we cling to our caregivers, hence the cross-cultural validity. In reception too such metaphors are more satisfying than their more abstract counterparts. Imagine somebody desperately performing CPR on an unconscious person by the side of the road. She is more likely to exclaim, "Hang in there!" than "Survive!" The same holds true for allegorical vignettes that extend such metaphors into stories. The Man in the Well enables us to *feel* that life is an arduous struggle to postpone certain death while experiencing some pleasure but mostly fear and pain. We are presented not with the abstract concepts of 'struggle', 'death', 'pleasure', 'fear' and 'pain', but with a series of concrete actions and objects: 'clutching to a branch', 'dragon', 'honey', 'trembling', 'bees and cobras'. What we get in these instances is not simply the name of an emotion but what T. S. Eliot called an "objective correlative, [...] a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion".[5] Allegorical storytelling sustains the analogy and develops it into an experiential texture that activates the mind's capacity for re-embodying the actions and affects performed or experienced by others, including fictitious

2 Senzaki 1957 [1919], 38–39; *King of the Hill* season 3, episode 1 ("Death of a Propane Salesman", first aired 15 September 1998). See also Becker 2014, 131–32.

3 See Harris and Tolmie 2011; Gibbs 2011.

4 For an updated overview and discussion on neural underpinnings, see Lakoff 2014. See also Herrero de Jáuregui's chapter in this volume.

5 Eliot 1921, 92.

characters.[6] The Man in the Well induces us to imagine and simulate the protagonist's movements (frantic seeking, stumbling and clinging) and empathize with his emotion of fear and sensations of pain and sweetness.

But let us focus on the dragon at the bottom of the pit, on Hades, as the creature is identified in Greek versions of the story. The parable leaves the reader in suspense, but any attempt at a sequel would have to depict how the man falls prey to the beast. This is indeed what happens in one of the true gems of Cretan Renaissance literature, the otherwise unknown fifteenth-century poet Bergadhis' *Apokopos* (*After Work*).[7] The poet relates how he once fell asleep after a day of hard work and dreamt that he was hunting a doe. In a flash, the animal disappears. By sunset he arrives at a blooming meadow in which he finds an apple tree surrounded by singing birds. In the top of the tree he sees a beehive. He climbs the tree and starts eating the honey, even though the bees sting him. Suddenly the branches start to shake. He looks down and finds two mice gnawing away the roots of the tree. The meadow is gone and the tree is standing on a dark cliff beside a well. The trunk tips over and the man comes crashing down into the open jaws of a dragon waiting at the bottom of the well.

But this is only the beginning. Down in the darkness the poet encounters two shadows who notice that he belongs to the land of the living. They immediately start interrogating him about the world above. They wonder if it is still as wonderful and rich in natural and cultural delights as when they were still alive. They learn that it is so, but that the living quickly forget the dead. Widows do not think of their husbands and let themselves become corrupted and exploited by scandalous churchmen. Parents and siblings are the only ones who remain loyal in their grief. After this the poet questions the two souls. They turn out to be two princes from the "city opposite of Rome" (Constantinople?) who died at sea while travelling to their sister in some foreign land. When they arrived in Hades they were surprised to find her waiting for them, as she had died from childbirth on the very same day. As the poet gets ready to leave, hordes of dead souls approach him with letters to the world above. Their message is unanimous: the dead are as joyless, dark and disfigured as the corpses they leave behind. Death is nothing but agony.

It has been argued that Bergadhis' use of the tree of life to open his Hades narrative primarily serves a decorative purpose: "[…] despite the rich potential, these motifs are exploited to intensify the lyrical, almost wonder-tale quality

6 On narrative, embodied simulation and empathy, see Gallese and Wojciehowski 2011.

7 See the edition by Vejleskov 2005, with a translation by Margaret Alexiou.

of the narrative, not to point out any allegory".[8] But the initial allusion to the world-famous 'icon of life' does seem significant, and it has a clear parallel in the dark woods and overtly allegorical beasts that send Dante on his journey in the *Comedia.* It signals that this is a poem of Life and Death. But what does it mean? It is tempting to read the deeply pessimistic description of life in Hades as implying a reinterpretation of the parable along the same lines as the modern Zen version: enjoy the honey while you can! Nothing better lies ahead. The *Apokopos* has been characterized as "a very modern anti-edifying, anti-traditional Underworld dream"; the same scholar adds: "One might summarize its didactic message as a kind of *carpe diem*".[9] This is true, but the imperative is not without qualification.

The whole piece is permeated by the related dichotomies love/desire or *agape/eros* and moderation/excess, praising the former and denigrating the latter notions. The shadows in Hades yearn for familiar love, widow chastity, charity and admiration for the beauty of nature and human culture. They suffer because of lust, forgetfulness of the dead, remarriage and greediness. The same principles appear to govern the adaptation of The Man in the Well at the beginning of the poem. The parable is not invoked as an allegory of 'life' but of 'life crisis', not unlike Dante's dark woods and allegorical beasts. The poet's experience at the beginning of the dream is one of harmonious admiration of the landscape he is riding through, of the meadow, the tree and the singing birds. It is not until he starts *consuming* the honey that all beauty disappears and he is swallowed by the dragon. The *Apokopos* may be modern, but it is still an edifying, outcome-oriented piece of fiction, as is often the case with *katabaseis*.[10]

So yes, the story persuades but it also explains and defines. It offers a definition of the abstract concept of 'death'. As the man falls down into the well we move from personification to topification; from the analogic frame Death is a Monster to Death is a Departure, or more specifically: Death is an irreversible and psychologically agonizing exile from life. This explicatory and defining function is important in all narratives about journeys to the Underworld. Note that we are not referring here to disclosure of 'details' about how afterlife is like in order to appease a reflective sense of curiosity or death anxiety, but to a much more basic and intuitive need to understand and define the abstract concept of 'death'. We often encounter the idea that the purpose of Hades accounts is to "acquaint the reader with an aspect of life inaccessible to humans and thus to

8 Alexiou 1991, 254.

9 Van Gemert 1991, 65.

10 See Graf's chapter in this volume.

remove the fear of the unknown".[11] This assumption is related to a widespread post-Enlightenment explanation of the universality of religion: belief in gods and an afterlife is a defence-mechanism against death anxiety and thoughts about one's own decomposition, which is supposedly deeply ingrained in all human beings – a view notably held by Freud.[12] And yes, empirical research often confirms that religious thoughts and convictions mitigate the potentially paralyzing effect of fearing one's own extinction; however, it also shows that death anxiety is not really a prominent feature of human life.[13] People do not go around constantly fearing death; the emotion needs to be triggered by some real or imagined stimulus. Accounts of the afterlife do not remedy some innate universal thanatophobia. If anything, they tend to activate such fears.

In the *Apokopos,* Hades is "bitter", guarded by hideous and armed, ferocious and black creatures with tongues of fire and bat-like wings and claws. The shades of the dead are black and covered with cobwebs; they are disfigured, dirty and worm-eaten, just like the corpses they left behind. They long to break free from their chains and subterranean "prison"; they sigh, groan, cry and collapse in lamentation. There must be functions besides consolation that make the analogy Death is a Departure more appealing than Death is Annihilation. It seems as if the formation of the latter analogic frame is more unlikely. When people die, they disappear; but we do not have consistent correlations in real-world embodied experience between disappearing and being 'annihilated'. We do, however, disappear from our habitual social contexts when we travel, and others depart from us and disappear.[14] The two-way nature of the association becomes explicit in the French cliché *partir c'est mourir un peu.* Since Death is irreversible it can be understood not only as any departure but as Exile, and Exile is conversely often understood as Death. This two-way association is often expressed, and it permeates canonical literary works such as the Hebrew Bible or Ovid's *Tristia*. It resonated with Dante, the exiled Guelph *popolano*, and with the Greek diaspora communities who read and loved the *Apokopos* – the first text in the Greek vernacular ever to be printed (1509), followed by a long series of reissues.

Hades journeys are, of course, not parables, but they serve similar functions in the way they define the abstract notions life and death, and envelop these definitions in an experiential texture that allows us to *feel* them in a sustained

11 "Death" in *Brill's New Pauly*, accessed 15 January 2017.

12 E.g. Freud 1955 [1900], 254: "Children know nothing of the horrors of corruption, of freezing in the ice-cold grave, of the terrors of eternal nothingness – ideas which grown-up people find it so hard to tolerate, as is proved by all the myths of a future life".

13 Jong and Halberstadt 2016.

14 For further explanations also based in cognitive psychology, see Larson 2016, chapter 5.

process. Let us revisit some of the narratives and rituals examined in this volume: what guiding metaphors do they extend, and with what emotion structures are they invested?

A Symphony of Grief, Enthusiasm and Fear: The *Odyssey*

In the Odyssean *Nekyia* we arrive at the other end of the journey undertaken by countless spirits of fallen warriors in the gory battle scenes of the *Iliad.* The weapon opens up a portal in a warrior's body through which blood and entrails gush out, but it also allows invisible entities to depart from the flesh and bones: might (μένος), lifespan (αἰών), feeling (θυμός) and, not least, spirit (ψυχή). No matter how macho the warrior was in life, his ψυχή is always a self-pitying wimp, howling and wailing as it instinctively soars through the air towards the house of Hades. In the process it acquires a somewhat ghostly status and is interchangeably called "image" or "phantom" (εἴδωλον). Odysseus arrives at the gates of Hades in a distant land, or so he tells his audience on Phaeacia. He summons the spirits and makes them temporarily conscious through an outlandish blood ritual.[15] The guiding metaphor is not quite Death is Departure, but rather 'Life is Unity of Entities' and 'Death is Separation of those Entities'. Odysseus does not encounter dead human beings in Hades but airy substances that used to form part of living wholes. The designation of this element as an "image" evokes the vague but unique impression that a person leaves behind in our minds after he or she disappears from our sight, let alone dies. But other "images" come not from first-hand experience but communal memory. The two kinds of encounter generate different expressive modes in Odysseus' account. First the hero meets with friends and family, Elpenor and his mother Antikleia. The moment their spirits taste the blood they awake to intense psychological pain (ἄχος), and Odysseus responds to the sight of them with tears and pity (τὴν/τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ δάκρυσα ἰδὼν ἐλέησά τε θυμῷ).[16] But soon the hero's curious gaze turns away from them to the famous heroines of the past. In this moment, the explicitly pathetic tone is replaced by the objective voice of an epic narrator. The cries of lamentation fade out and make way for a mythological catalogue of women, detailing their parents, consorts and children (11.235–27). Of course, some of the facts included in this list are intrinsically pathetic, but in narrating them Odysseus does not dwell on the heroines'

15 See the chapters of Ekroth and Friese in this volume.

16 Homer, *Odyssey* 11.55 and 87.

pathos or his own empathic response. The effect is similar to that of the so-called 'short obituaries' that characterize minor-character death in the *Iliad*.[17] Odysseus' story is eventually interrupted by a conversation on Phaeacia, but soon king Alcinous expresses his desire to hear more, and he explicitly asks Odysseus to speak about encounters with his own dead friends, about his "woes" (κήδεα).[18] Odysseus indulges him and picks up the pathetic mode once again, as he describes his encounter with Agamemnon. This spirit also awakes to wailing and pain (11.388; 466), and once again Odysseus responds with tears and pity (11.395). Likewise, Achilles cries (11.470) and expresses grief over his separation from father, son and his own bodily strength. But when he hears about his son's success there is a sudden outburst of a positive feelings as Achilles walks away over the asphodel meadow filled with joy (γηθοσύνη).[19] Immediately, Odysseus brings back our emotional attention to the pain (ἄχος) felt by all the other spirits there (11.540–41). But there is another exception: the famous anger (χόλος) and sublime silence of Ajax. "He might yet have spoken to me", Odysseus adds, but once more the hero is taken over by desire to see heroes of a more distant past: Minos, Tityos, Tantalos, Sisyphos and Herakles. Again, a new section begins where the explicitly pathetic mode disappears. The objective, epic gaze prevails and Odysseus the narrator mentions no tears, pity, sorrow or even pain, despite the fact that some of these heroes suffer punishments involving physical pain, hunger, thirst and exhaustion. Odysseus wants to see more and more, but suddenly thousands of dead spirits crowd around him making a terrifying, godlike sound. Overtaken by fear of monsters that might appear, Odysseus interrupts the ritual and heads back to the ships.

To summarize, the emotional structure of the Odyssean *Nekyia* offers two types of encounters grouped into different sections with different narrative attitudes: one more subjective and pathetic, the other more objective and disinterested. This seems to allegorize the different experiences of retrieving personal and collective memories respectively. Grief resulting from a sense of loss – loss of corporeal as well as social unity – dominates the representation of Odysseus' acquaintances. Exceptions that prove the rule are Achilles' brief moment of joy and Ajax' anger. But the heroes of the distant past, despite being associated with intrinsically sad and painful lives or afterlives, are not described as aching, wailing or crying, and Odysseus expresses no pity for them. Moreover, we must imagine that the blood ritual inspired a

17 See Griffin 1980, 103–43.

18 Homer, *Odyssey* 11.370–72.

19 Homer, *Odyssey* 11.540.

measure of fear in the Phaeacians and Greek audiences alike. Fear is also an issue for Odysseus. In the end, "green fear" forces him to interrupt the *nekyia* but for a long time he fights the feeling, not only in order to gain the information from Teiresias that he came for but also out of curiosity and a strong desire to seek knowledge. His audience is also curious but their interests differ. Odysseus is repeatedly drawn away from his sad encounters with friends and family towards observing figures of the past in a spirit of non-committal historicism, as it were. But his audience, as represented by Alcinous, desires stories about people who Odysseus knew in life and their "woes" (κήδεα). Playing with the pains and pleasures of grief, enthusiastic seeking and overpowering fear, Odysseus strings together his story "like a bard".[20]

A Work of Memory: The Bacchic Gold Lamellae

In the Bacchic mysteries, Death is a departure but, again, not just any departure but a round trip to and from a better place. The purpose of simulating the journey to Hades in life was to throw away the return ticket and change the normal course of events. The initiates received instructions on the topography of Hades and how to navigate there successfully: drink not from the lake of forgetfulness on the right! Fight your thirst and continue to the lake of memory. Say these words to the guardians of the place. Only then will you be able to continue your journey on the sacred road together with the other heroes or *bakchoi*. These instructions were inscribed on thin gold leaves, "works of Memory", and buried with the initiates. They were perhaps memorized and ritually rehearsed as well. From the matter-of-fact instructions found on the gold leaves it is difficult to say much about the affective character of those experiences. However, some of the tablets contain either greetings to the soul in its new blessed state,[21] or first-person dramatizations of what it will exclaim after it has broken free from the circle of reincarnation. This future death and resurrection as an immortal will clearly be accompanied by feelings that have no correlates in earthly life. "Greetings, you who have experienced the experience you never before experienced. A human being you have become a god", the soul is congratulated in a fourth-century tablet excavated in a tumulus in Thurii.

20 Homer, *Odyssey* 11.368.

21 See Herrero de Jaúregui's chapter in this volume.

A Work of Forgetfulness: The Trophonios Oracle in Lebadeia, Boeotia

"He has consulted the oracle of Trophonios". The proverb was used to mock gloomy and mirthless persons, [22] suggesting that finding comfort was hardly central to all ritual journeys to the Underworld. This religious institution in Lebadeia, Boeotia, was the only oracle that gave responses through the person himself who consulted it. In order to converse with the dead hero, the inquirer needed to descend below the ground. Fear is the signature emotion associated with this experience already in Classical sources,[23] and we can see why from the much later eyewitness report provided in the second century CE by Pausanias (9.39). After travelling to the site (the journey was usually long and arduous) a series of sacrifices had to be made. Each time the priests consulted the entrails with unsure results, holding the inquirer in a constant state of uncertainty as to whether the descent would be propitious or not. During the same time he had to go through purification rituals involving cold baths, sleep deprivation and dietary restrictions.[24] On the day of the descent, the inquirer – by now broken down by physical and psychological stress – performed a ritual that simulated the soul's descent into the Underworld. He was anointed and washed by two boys called *Hermae*, dressed in a ceremonial linen tunic and made to drink from two fountains: first that of forgetfulness and then that of memory.

After this the inquirer climbed down into a dark man-built chasm. He carried a honey-cake in his hands, associated with terror and frightful phenomena such as snakes and bellowing in the sources.[25] At the bottom of the chasm there was a hole into which the inquirer pushed his feet, and soon the whole body was transported into a dark cave where the future was announced by sight or hearing. After this the inquirer emerged "paralysed with terror and unconscious both of himself and of his surroundings", as Pausanias reports. While still in this state of shock, the priests interrogated the man and wrote down the prophecy. As a whole, the visit to the oracle meant enduring an

22 Pseudo-Plutarch, *Alexandrian Proverbs* 1.51.

23 Aristophanes, *Clouds* 507–8; for the Trophonios oracle, see Bonnechere 2003 and the chapters of Bonnechere, Friese and Herrero de Jaúregui in this volume.

24 Pausanias 9.39.6; Cratinus fr. 233.

25 Aristophanes, *Clouds* 507–8; *Etymologicum Genuinum* β 220 (might derive from Atticist lexicon); Suda, s.v. μ 526; Scholia in Aristophanes' *Clouds* 508. See Bonnechere's chapter in this volume.

experience with parallels in certain modern forms of torture: social confinement, phobic stressors such as terrifying sounds, lack of sleep, cold baths, starvation and sensory deprivation. The information extracted through such procedures is notoriously unreliable,[26] and the same probably held true for the priests' interrogation of the shocked inquirer. Sensory deprivation was probably the most important component. Even after a short period time in an isolation tank under controlled conditions, human beings will report psychosis-like experiences including extreme emotions and visual as well as auditory hallucinations.[27]

Strictly speaking, consulting Trophonios was not a journey to a Pan-Hellenic Hades, but a much shorter descent into a hero's tomb, although standard mythical elements of the soul's descent to Hades were involved. Fear was by far the most important affective ingredient; it was produced through actions, images and words, but the core of this *katabasis* experience was made up of something more powerful: darkness and silence.

A Katabatic Time Machine: The *Timarion*

"What do you mean? Do I have to go to Lebadeia and make a fool of myself wearing fine linen and carrying a cake in my hands and crawl into your cave through that passage that's so low, in order to be able to see that you're dead just like us, besides your witchcraft?"[28] These words, uttered by Menippos to Trophonios in one of Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, have a sobriety to them that differs from flickering spirits, dazed initiated and shocked inquirers we have met so far. But this vision of Hades as a place of clear-headed debate between dead spirits has a long history too, going back at least to the discussion between Agamemnon, Achilles and the suitors in the final book of the *Odyssey* (24.1–202). The mere possibility that such an afterlife might await us makes Socrates look forward to death in the *Apology*. Not only will he migrate to a place that houses worthy and historically significant interlocutors, but more importantly the conversations will be free and immune to earthly threats

26 See O'Mara 2015.

27 E.g. Daniel et al. 2014. On sensory deprivation and Greek cave rituals, see Ustinova 2009.

28 Lucian, *Dialogues of the Dead* 10.2: Τί φῄς; εἰ μὴ εἰς Λεβάδειαν γὰρ παρέλθω καὶ ἐσταλμένος ταῖς ὀθόναις γελοίως μᾶζαν ἐν ταῖν χεροῖν ἔχων εἰσερπύσω διὰ τοῦ στομίου ταπεινοῦ ὄντος ἐς τὸ σπήλαιον, οὐκ ἂν ἠδυνάμην εἰδέναι, ὅτι νεκρὸς εἶ ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς μόνῃ τῇ γοητείᾳ διαφέρων; Trans. MacLeod (modified).

such as the death penalty.[29] Hades might be feared by regular people but for true intellectuals it is a far better place than earth. Lucian often revisited this version of Hades in order to stage debates on questions such as the human condition and the good life, or to point out theological inconsistencies, as in the example above: how can Trophonios be both in Hades and in his shrine at the same time?[30]

The advent of Christianity did not eradicate the pagan idea of the afterlife. 'Hades' was, after all, the standard word for Underworld in the Septuagint and the New Testament. Rather, the pagan divinity and his house of disembodied souls had to be tamed and subjugated.[31] In this context too, the guiding metaphor was Death is a departure; but again, not just any departure but a temporary 'stopover' – a place for the soul to await Christ's Second Coming. It could be seen as the darker counterpart to paradise reserved for those who had sinned in life. However, due to scriptural ambiguity on the precise nature of the afterlife, Hades was often referred to as the only alternative.[32] We have already seen an example of this in the *Apokopos*. Pagan stories about the afterlife were not totally expelled to the realm of mythology but retained that grain of truth needed for Lucianic Underworld satire to function. The tradition could always be revived and its serious game picked up where predecessors left off. It happened more frequently than ever in the twelfth century, and the most remarkable example from this 'golden age of Lucian' is the anonymous *Timarion.*[33] The eponymous hero visits Hades and converses with pagan and Christian figures of the recent and distant past. However, his descent is far more dramatic and charged with emotion and bodily pain than, for instance, Menippos' rather casual journey to the same place in Lucian's *Nekyomanteia*. This is explicitly signalled in the subtitle of the piece: *Timarion, or About What He Suffered* (ἢ περὶ τῶν κατ᾽ αὐτὸν παθημάτων).

As the dialogue opens, Timarion meets his old friend and tells him about a recent visit to Thessalonike, the second city of the Byzantine Empire at this time. On his way back to Constantinople he fell seriously ill with high fever and vomiting. He is still terrified to speak of what happened after that (331–33). He fell asleep and was visited by two horrifying demons who took his soul and escorted it all the way to iron gates of Hades and its monstrous guardians.

29 Plato, *The Apology* 32.
30 On Lucian and Hades, see Nesselrath's contribution to this volume.
31 See Nilsson's contribution to this volume.
32 On death and afterlife in Byzantium, see Marinis 2016.
33 See Marciniak's contribution to this volume.

Kydion trembles with fear (413). But now the story suddenly lightens up. The company flying through the air "with a roaring noise" (428) and instead walking calmly with soft steps. They are no longer in "enemy territory" but home. Everywhere they are greeted with friendliness. Timarion eventually stands trial where even the three stern and potentially hostile judges (two pagans and one Christian but iconoclast) favour his rhetorical, legal and medical argumentation over the case made by the demons. He is sent back to life, but already before the trial all negative emotions are long gone. Timarion has started to enjoy himself, conversing with the great minds of the past in Hades. Just as Socrates was happy to leave the dogmas of Classical Athens for a life of freedom in the Underworld, so the dead Byzantine sophists are happy to have left shallow display of intellectual life in the Constantinople for true philosophy.[34]

The Emotional Structure of Round Trips to Hades

Katabasis narratives always involve an expansion of the analogy Death is a Departure. But all departures are not the same and the details matter. Is it a departure of the mind, or only of a small part of it? Is it a departure to a final destination, a stopover or is it a round trip that normally leads back to life again? Is it a departure to a cruel, hopeless state of exile, or will we be returning to our true home? The narratives experiment with these questions, enable us to *feel* them and often encourage us to take action accordingly in our lives. It is not the case that they always present an idyllic vision of the afterlife in order to soothe some pre-existing, chronic thanatophobia common to all human beings. In fact, fear and grief are the most prominent features in the emotion structure of these stories and rituals. If we were to posit any psychotherapeutic function it have to be that of a precautionary treatment, a vaccine, a controlled exposure to emotional triggers that prepares the readers for future moments of death anxiety that might come. Not surprisingly, therapists find that reading and writing narratives about death and dying is a helpful exercise for clients that have difficulties coming to terms with death.[35] It might be tempting to regard the *katabasis* as a reflection of, or preparation for, mid-life crises, seeing as the great majority of the characters who undertake the journey to the Underworld in Western literature

34 See *Timarion* 619–22 Romano. See also Nilsson 2016.

35 Furer, Walker and Stein 2007, 151–59.

are middle-aged men – they are all *nel mezzo del cammin di nosta vita.* But the empirical evidence for a midlife crisis as a regular occurrence is weak,[36] and the psychological literature on the matter is often directly influenced by *katabasis* mythology.[37]

Such a therapeutic hypothesis would be more persuasive if fear and darkness always made way for joy and light; if the route always went from fiery rivers, iron gates and monstrous guardians to the Elysian fields or Paradise and ended in enthusiastic celebrations of a new blissful life on the other side; if all journeys to Hades were divine comedies rather than divine tragedies. But this is often not the case in the long Greek *katabasis* tradition; not for the frightened Phaeaceans and Archaic audiences listening to Odysseus; not for the traumatized inquirer emerging from Trophonios' sanctuary in the Roman era; and not for the early modern diaspora communities so willingly lending their ears to the lamentation of the exiled souls in the *Apokopos.* Their emotional rewards lie either in the capacity of artistic representations to transubstantiate sadness into a pleasurable experience,[38] which is why Alcinous listens to Odysseus, or in enthusiastically seeking knowledge about the past and future in a place situated outside time,[39] which is why Odysseus and Trophonios' visitors conquered their fears and endured what they endured. But perhaps the positive emotions following *after* rather than during these gloomy round-trips to Hades are important too; not in the afterlife but in life. In the moment we put down the book, leave Lebadeia, climb up the well and continue eating our precious honey as if nothing ever happened.

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36 Galambos et al. 2015; Lachman 2015.

37 E.g. Jung's *Red Book* or Stein 1983.

38 See now Mennighaus et al. 2017.

39 On the core affect SEEKING, see Panksepp and Biven 2012, 95–144.

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